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QUEEN VICTORIA



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BY

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QUEEN VICTORIA

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E. F. BENSON



QUEEN VICTORIA

CHAPTER I

I

WHEN Queen Charlotte, wife of George III had given birth to no less than fifteen Princes and Princesses she may well have thought that the Royal House of Hanover would not lack heirs to the throne of England for many generations to come. But when she died in the year 1818 its stability was by no means assured, for though twelve of her children were still alive they were all getting on in years, and she had not a single grandchild, male or female, who could ever wear the Crown or defend the Faith. Grandchildren there were in plenty, for her third son William, Duke of Clarence, had no less than ten olive-branches round about his table at Bushey, but as all of these were the offspring of the charming actress Mrs. Jordan they were of no avail for dynastic purposes. A similar dynastic defect afflicted the two children of the Queen's sixth son Augustus, Duke of Sussex, for their mother was Lady Augusta Murray, daughter of the Earl of Dunmore, and the Royal Marriage Act debarred them too from the throne. There had once been a direct heir of the third generation, Princess Charlotte, daughter and only child of George, Prince of Wales. In 1816 she had married Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, but she had died in November 1817 in giving birth to a still-born seven-months' boy. Thus in 1818 though twelve brothers and sisters might, if they died in order of strict seniority, sit in turn, one after the

other, on the throne of their fathers, there were none to succeed them. Valhalla would be denuded of its gods.

The nation generally had little affection for its reigning House, and would have viewed its extinction with singular equanimity, for all these Royal Dukes had rendered themselves either negligible or unpopular. In fact, when it was known that the Princess Charlotte was to have a baby, the Stock Exchange reckoned that the Funds would go up $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ if it was a daughter and 6% if it was a son,* for, whatever its sex, it would succeed after the death of the Prince Regent and its mother, and there would be no more of these insolvent middle-aged drones. But the Family, very naturally, did not look on their extinction with such unconcern, and several of the Royal Brothers were giving the question their most careful consideration. Luckily we are enabled to know in great detail what one of them thought about it, and what he personally was prepared to do to preserve the country from such a disaster. This brother, whose meditations are preserved to us, was Edward, Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III. He was born in 1767 and was thus in his fifty-first year, and, unmarried as yet, had lived quietly and contentedly with his mistress Madame St. Laurent, since he was twenty-three. She was of the same age as himself, and had been with him in Canada and other of the Dominions in the course of his military service, which had come to an end in 1803. He had lived in England at Ealing till 1815, but had been unable to make the annuity of £12,000, which the nation had voted him, meet his reasonable needs; being in debt to the extent of about £50,000, he was much bothered by his creditors, and in the pursuit of economy and tranquillity had gone to live at Brussels with his mistress and his equerry Sir John Conroy, who had been with him for some years. Here the news

* Stockmar, *Memoirs*, i, p. 59.

reached him of the death of his niece Princess Charlotte and her baby. Having made up his mind as to where duty pointed, he sent one morning for Mr. Thomas Creevey, ex-member of Parliament, voluminous diarist and man about town, for a talk. They had a few words about the appointment of an English Chaplain at Brussels, Mr. Creevey alluded to the lamented death of the Princess, and the Duke took this as a cue to give him his judicious and panoramic views on Family Affairs. Mr. Creevey entered them in his diary while they were still fresh in his memory ; succinctly tabulated they were as follows :—

(i) The Duke's eldest brother, George, Prince of Wales, would never have another heir, for in order to get one he would first have to divorce his wife Princess Caroline. To obtain his divorce he must prove her in an English Court of Justice to have committed adultery, which was equivalent to high treason, and punishable with death. It might be considered certain (here the Duke was wrong) that he could not face the unpopularity of attempting that, so George could be considered out of it.

(ii) The next brother was Frederick, Duke of York. As the Duchess of York was now fifty years old, it was out of the question that she should now have a child.

(iii) The third of Edward's elder brothers was William, Duke of Clarence. William had already spoken to him of the terms under which he would sacrifice his domestic quietude for the sake of the House, and he demanded a settlement such as was proper for a Prince who married expressly for the succession, the payment of all his very large debts and a generous provision for his ten natural children by Mrs. Jordan. That was preposterous : no Government could consent to it. Of course he had a right to marry if he chose.

(iv) The fourth brother in order of succession was him-

-self, "and although," (he said) "I trust I shall be at all times ready to obey any call my country might make upon me, God only knows the sacrifice it will be to make it, whenever I shall think it my duty to become a married man." He and his mistress Madame St. Laurent, who was of good family and had never been an actress (like Mrs. Jordan), had lived together for twenty-seven years in all climates and vicissitudes. She was as disinterested as she was faithful, and the Duke gave Mr. Creevey the figures of the various allowances he had made her when times were good or bad. To part with her would be a terrible pang : what would Mr. Creevey say if he had to be separated from Mrs. Creevey ?

(v) Madame St. Laurent already knew that there was something in the air. One morning soon after Princess Charlotte's death there had been a paragraph in the *Morning Chronicle* which alluded to the possibility of his marriage, and he had tossed the paper over to her, as they breakfasted, without looking at it, while he read his letters. A violent hysterical attack followed, and when she recovered, she pointed to this allusion as the cause of it. Since then "daily dissimulation had been necessary to keep her thoughts off the subject."

(vi) With regard to his plan of action, the Duke had made up his mind to give his brother William three clear months ; if during that time William took no steps towards matrimony, the Duke had made up his mind to go to England, and, as in duty bound, "take measures" himself. In accordance with the daily dissimulation now necessary with Madame, he would tell her that he was merely going to pay his respects to the Regent on his birthday.

(vii) With regard to his partner in the duty that lay before him, he was considering two candidates, the Princess

of Baden, and the Princess Victoria of Saxe-Coburg, now the widow of Charles, Prince of Leiningen. He inclined to the latter, because her brother Prince Leopold, widower of Princess Charlotte, was popular in England.

(viii) But before these measures were taken, there were several points to be settled. The Duke insisted that "justice must be done by the Nation and the Ministers" to his faithful mistress. She must be given an annuity, secured for life, sufficient to enable her when he left her to keep up a suitable establishment and a carriage, "so that her friends will treat her with respect." He intended to appoint four trustees, the famous lawyer, Mr. Brougham, Mr. Creevey and two others to arrange this. For himself he proposed to ask an additional annuity of £25,000 a year according to the precedent established when the Duke of York unsuccessfully married for the sake of the succession in 1791. Money had a higher purchasing power then than it had to-day, but he would waive pecuniary niceties. His debts must also be paid, but they were not large, and when all these conditions were complied with, the Nation, he considered, would be greatly his debtor.

The Duke was a notable precisian, both in military and domestic matters, and the detail and thoroughness of this proposed campaign were quite characteristic of him, so that making due allowance for Mr. Creevey's humorous pen and his natural desire to make a good story out of this amazing interview, we may take his account as being authentic. Perhaps the most momentous item in it was the Duke's choice of the lady for whose sake he was prepared, with suitable compensation, to forsake his mistress, for it heralded the rising of the star of the House of Coburg, the richest romance in all the chronicles of dynastic alliances.

The star had risen once before, but its course had been

brief and highly elliptical. Its first appearance had been brilliant indeed, for Prince Leopold, youngest brother of Duke Ernest of Coburg, a small and impoverished German principality, had married the heiress to the throne of England, and if he had had living issue would have been the father of the future sovereign : but then Princess Charlotte and her still-born son had died, and the star had abruptly set. Prince Leopold, now twenty-eight years old, had personally not done so badly, for the nation had granted him on his marriage an annuity of £50,000 (double what his Uncle Kent was asking for) with Marlborough House as his London residence, and the charming Crown property of Claremont as his country seat. There he lived with another young man, Christian Friedrich Stockmar, who had accompanied him from Coburg to England as his doctor, and who, so it was to turn out, was destined to play a considerable part in the Coburg romance as a secret and highly trustworthy agent.

Prince Leopold's sister, Victoria, now aged thirty-two was a widow with two children, Charles and a daughter Feodore. Her husband, Prince of Leiningen, a principality even more impoverished than Coburg, had died in 1814, and she lived at Amorbach, in dire poverty, as Regent for her thirteen-year-old son. The Duke of Kent had been of great use to Prince Leopold in procuring his marriage with Princess Charlotte, and by the accomplishment of the main item in the scheme which he had so precisely outlined to Mr. Creevey he would be serving the House of Coburg again. For though it was no longer possible that Leopold should be father of an heir to the English Crown, it was almost equally advantageous for the fortunes of the House that his sister should have this promising chance of becoming the heir's mother. Leopold was therefore strongly in favour of the marriage, and, though his sister was at first

reluctant, it was arranged. The House of Commons, in its niggardly manner, did not see eye to eye with the Duke of Kent about a further annuity of £25,000, and decided that £6000 would be sufficient, out of which, it is to be hoped, he provided a carriage for Madame St. Laurent, and an establishment which would ensure her the respect of her friends which so faithful a mistress had surely earned.

But the duty of providing an heir to the House of Hanover was felt not by the Duke of Kent alone, but by his elder brother the Duke of Clarence, and his youngest brother Adolphus, Duke of Cambridge. The latter resided at Hanover, as representing his father George III, who was King of Hanover as well as King of England, and he led off by marrying, on May 7, 1818 the Princess Augusta of Hesse-Cassel, daughter of the Landgrave. Nobody paid much attention to that, as his two elder brothers were about to be married also, and three weeks later, on May 29, the Duke of Kent married the widowed Victoria at the bride's ancestral home at Coburg. They came to England in July to be married according to English rites at the chapel in Kew Palace and to make their bow to the Regent, and then retreated again to Amorbach, where the Duchess continued her Regency for her son Charles, to await events.

Finally, the senior of the brothers followed suit, and the Duke of Clarence, now aged fifty-two, married Princess Adelaide, eldest daughter of the Duke of Saxe-Meiningen. All the brides, it need hardly be pointed out, were German, for the Royal Family of England since the time of George I had been faithful to their nationality, and the exiguous stream of Stuart blood in their veins was now quite losing itself in the Teutonic sands. If a child blessed any of these three unions it would be wholly German on its mother's side, and almost entirely so on its father's also.

The English, who were not at this time very reverent in

their regard for the reigning House, saw something slightly comic in this highly moral desertion of mistresses and this passion for legitimate parentage on the part of these middle-aged gentlemen, and an unidentified wit said that Royal Marriages had become so common that Royal circles resembled a card-party playing the new game of Russian Bezique, in which, by the rules, these marriages must precede resultant sequences. It was also remarked that these sacrifices of private convenience on the altar of dynastic duty were performed in the opposite spirit to that which prompted the Patriarch Abraham, at the Divine command, to be prepared to sacrifice his son Isaac. The Patriarch offered up his only descendent, while the Royal Brothers offered up themselves for the sake of getting one.

These vigorous matrimonial measures were swiftly rewarded, for whereas in 1818 there had been no heir of the third generation to the English Crown, there were born, during 1819, no less than four. The Duchess of Clarence in March gave birth to a daughter, and though the baby only lived a few hours, there were now grounds for hope on the part of its parents and for cruel apprehension on the part of its uncles, that more might follow. In May the celebrated German midwife Frau Siebold was in attendance at Kensington Palace, whither the Duke and Duchess of Kent had returned from Amorbach, in order that their expected child should be born on English soil, and on May 24 the Duchess was safely delivered of a daughter, who at the moment of her birth was the direct inheritor of the throne. The Duchess of Cambridge, out in Hanover, gave birth to a son, christened George, and by way of an unexpected bonus with regard to heirs, the Duchess of Cumberland, who had now been married for four years, became the mother of a son, who was also named George. These two Georges, being offspring of younger brothers of the

Duke of Kent did not get in the way of his baby daughter : she, by right of her father's primogeniture, came first, Prince George of Cumberland second, and Prince George of Cambridge third. Three small infants, of almost identical age, one at Kensington Palace, one at Kew and one at Hanover were sleeping and squawling and being fed each in happy ignorance of the chances that governed the prodigious destiny of one of them. But the stability of the House of Hanover had in the briefest of possible periods been buttressed and amazingly re-inforced, and the uneasy spirit of Queen Caroline must have been reassured. A hundred years later, when the Crowns of the countries of Europe were being blown about like withered leaves in Vallombrosa by the blasts of revolutions, her spirit, if still unquiet, would surely have been laid to rest when she saw that the Valhalla of the Hanovers was still secure though sadly Anglicized, and that the great-grandson of her son Edward, was King of England, and the grand-daughter of her son George was Queen.

Not less remarkable than the increased stability of the House of Hanover this year, was the potential ascendancy of the Star of Coburg. Frau Siebold who had so successfully assisted at the birth of the little Princess at Kensington Palace in May, was summoned three months later to Rosenau, a country residence of Duke Ernest of Coburg, brother of Leopold and the Duchess of Kent. Her ministrations were equally successful there, and the gay little Duchess Louise, still only nineteen years old, was safely delivered of her second son, who, among many other Christian names was called Albert. The day after his birth his grandmother, the Dowager Duchess, wrote to her daughter the Duchess of Kent describing the happy event, and, in allusion to the month in which the infant Princess had been born at Kensington Palace added : "How pretty

the *May Flower* will be when I see it in a year's time. Siebold cannot sufficiently describe what a dear little love it is." * Was she already beginning to think "long long thoughts" about her two grandchildren? In any case she very soon did.

II

THE *Mayflower* meantime had been christened at Kensington Palace on June 24, in the gold font brought from the regalia at the Tower. Her name had not been settled for certain as yet, and the Regent who attended the ceremony had a slight altercation with the baby's father. Tsar Alexander I had himself suggested that he should be godfather, and so the Regent said she should be called "Alexandrina" and nothing more, but eventually her mother's name Victoria was added, and Alexandrina Victoria was received into the Protestant church.† The rite of vaccination, then not very commonly practised in England, followed. From the first Victoria was a very healthy child, and her Royal Uncles, so her father thought, looked on her thriving with singular disfavour, for he was on very bad terms with them all, and unless the Duchess of Clarence intervened again with another child, the Duke of Kent's line, whether in the person of little Victoria or a future son, stood first in the succession. Fraternal jealousy no doubt thus entered into the hostile feelings with which they regarded the nursery at Kensington Palace, and they also personally disliked the Duchess. At present she knew little or no English, and though her sister-in-law Adelaide came to talk German to her she felt lonely. The Royal Brothers were jealous of her for she was one of the "lucky Coburgs," sister of Leopold, who for his ineffectual services in aid of

* Grey, *Early Years of the Prince Consort*, p. 11.

† *See Queen Victoria*, p. 22.

the perpetuation of the Regent's line had been rewarded with two houses in England kept up by the State and an annuity of £50,000. The Duchess, moreover, was not at all a wise woman, she was resentful of these slights and instead of trying to conciliate her relations (which, after all, would probably have been a hopeless job) she returned dislike for dislike, and when the time came that it was clear that Princess Victoria would be the next occupant of the throne of England, she shewed that she had not forgotten these early years.

Their finances were in a poor state, for the Duke and Duchess had to keep up a Royal Household of a modest sort, and though the grant of £6000 a year was of some assistance, much of the Duke's original annuity of £12,000 must have been pledged in advance to satisfy some of his more pressing creditors. Debts continued to accumulate, and, failing to sell his house at Ealing, he threatened to leave England again and resume residence at Amorbach. The Duchess's daughter by her previous marriage, Princess Feodore of Leiningen had come over with them before the birth of her baby sister and lived with her mother, and during this autumn of 1819 there also came her governess Fräulein Lehzen, daughter of a Hanoverian pastor :* she was to make herself of considerable significance before she left England again twenty-three years later. The family spent some weeks at Claremont with Prince Leopold who had his faithful Stockmar with him, and with the Duke was his confidential equerry Sir John Conroy. In December they took a small house at Sidmouth to escape the winter fogs of London, and towards the end of January 1820, the Duke, who had always been a very robust man, caught a chill, and pneumonia set in. Prince Leopold posted down from Claremont to be with his sister, and

* Letters of Queen Victoria, 2nd Series, II, p. 64.

found that his brother-in-law was desperately ill. He made a will on his death-bed naming Sir John Conroy as one of his executors and appointing his wife as sole guardian of his child. He died on January 23, and before the month was out King George III died also, and the Regent now fifty-eight years old was King George IV.

Prince Leopold took charge down at Sidmouth. In later years, when he thought that Victoria, then Queen of England, was not grateful enough for all his affectionate second-fatherhood to her, he wrote her a letter referring to this time, pathetically telling her that, if he had not opened his purse, she and her mother would never have been able to pay for their journey back to London.* Poor as the Duchess was and disliked by her husband's relations it does not seem really likely that they would have left her to stay indefinitely at Sidmouth : something would have been done for the mother of an eight-months' baby who now stood two lives closer to the throne. Moreover, from the moment of her husband's death the annuity of £6000 settled on him became hers for life, and so to hire a carriage herself was within her means. Her own income from Coburg was not more than two or three hundred pounds, but now Leopold gave her an additional £3000. Since it was English tax-payers who gave him his handsome annuity of £50,000 (for otherwise he was as impecunious as his sister), the reproaches that the poor woman had to be supplied with means of obtaining the bare necessities of life from her Coburg relations is not wholly justified : it was entirely English money that provided her with her income of £9000. As for the Duke of Kent's debts, which the nation had refused to discharge for him, she was not responsible for them, and there was no question of her paying them or of her being asked to do so, for they were largely

* Letters of Queen Victoria, 1st Series, i, p. 258.

loans made him by personal friends, like Lord Fitzwilliam and Lord Dundas.*

Then there was the question of where she was to live. Should she return to Amorbach with her baby daughter, resume her Regency for her son Charles, and bring up Victoria abroad, or remain in England in an alien land among these unsympathetic relatives of her husband? Prince Leopold was very strong that she must stop. Only the lives of three middle-aged, all childless, uncles stood between Victoria and the throne. George IV disliked the Duchess, and would personally have been very glad to have bundled her and her baby out of the country (and indeed the mother would not have been sorry to go), but her brother's insistence prevailed.† She gave up her Regency, and settled down at Kensington Palace. There were herself, her daughter Feodore, now in her thirteenth year and the baby of eight months, and the principal members of her household were her lady-in-waiting Baroness de Späth, her daughter's governess Fräulein Louise Lehzen, and, as secretary and Controller of her Household, her late husband's equerry and executor, Sir John Conroy. He had a wife, and several children, the youngest of whom was a baby daughter Victoire, who became Princess Victoria's constant playmate.

With this settling into not very commodious quarters at Kensington Palace, which was to be the Duchess's home for the next seventeen years, a complete silence closed down for a while over the handsome, vivacious but not very wise mother and the very fat and healthy little baby. In December 1820 the prospects of Victoria suffered eclipse, for the Duchess of Clarence gave birth to a second daughter christened Elizabeth, who was now direct heir to the throne

* *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, i, p. 307.

† *Letters*, I, 1, p. 258.

after the death of George IV and his two brothers. But, though total, this eclipse was only temporary, for in March 1821 came the death of little Princess Elizabeth, and no further shadow intervened to dim the brightness of the star of the House of Coburg.



CHAPTER II

MEANTIME the new King had been much occupied in those domestic measures his conduct of which caused him to be almost as unpopular as his brother Cumberland. He had been extremely ill at the time of his accession but a drastic bloodletting (150 ounces, so Henry Brougham told Mr. Creevey) did him all the good in the world. His first business was the matter of his divorce from his wife, Queen Caroline. The Duke of Kent in his speculations about the succession had thought that he would be deterred by the unpopularity such an attempt would earn him, but he underrated George's crass vindictiveness. The Queen was abroad at the time of his accession, and the offer of £50,000 a year was made her if she would promise never to return to England, but this she refused, and prepared for her journey. She knew that evidence had been collected to prove, or infer, her adultery with an Italian servant of hers called Bergami, but, whether conscious of her innocence or confident in the popular outcry which proceedings against her would evoke, she landed at Dover on June 5th, 1820, and was received with Royal honours at the port, and enthusiastic sympathy and general illuminations welcomed her arrival in London. The King at once sent to his Houses of Parliament documents setting forth his reasons for divorcing her, and he gave special instructions that mention of "our most gracious Queen Caroline" should be omitted from the prayer for the Royal Family. This

touched the lady's sense of humour. "Praying," she said, "always makes me hungry ; if they put me in the Liturgy I shall be absolutely famished." The Bill for her divorce came before the House of Lords in July, and on the voting on the second reading it was passed by a majority of twenty-eight. But when the third reading came on this majority had shrunk to nine, eleven Bishops voting for it, and Lord Liverpool withdrew the Bill. That bluff sailor the Duke of Clarence, thinking perhaps that George might yet marry again and have a child, leant forward from the gallery and shouted "Content" at the top of his voice. Prince Leopold went to see the Queen, who, after all, was his mother-in-law, and thereby earned the King's animosity, which he manifested very characteristically by turning his back on him at a Levée, for George's manners could be atrocious as well as exquisite. But, soon after, insatiable curiosity was too much for him, and he consented to see Leopold again and asked him strings of questions as to how Caroline looked and how she was dressed.*

To divert his mind from this defeat, the King gave his undivided attention to his own Coronation : he was determined to treat his subjects to a display of truly regal magnificence at their expense, and Parliament voted £240,000 to enable him to do it properly. The fact that Queen Caroline, still his lawful Consort, had made up her mind to be crowned too, added zest, and the necessary precautions for preventing that, for the people were all on her side, were elaborate and costly. Barricades were erected across every street leading to the Abbey, the route by which the King would come being strongly guarded, and the landing places on the river were held by pickets of reliable prize-fighters. The King was gouty and colossally stout, the day was hot, but for over five hours he supported the weight of his robes and regal

* Cheston, *The Regent and his daughter*, pp. 278, 279

tokens before he sat down to the banquet in Westminster Hall after the prodigious ceremony. But all had been most successful, Caroline's three attempts to get admittance had been foiled, and her husband had given the last of his superb squanderings of public money. A fortnight afterwards Queen Caroline died, possibly poisoned, but the King recovered from the shock sufficiently well to go out to Hanover and be crowned there also, at the expense of his German lieges. Thereafter little more was seen of him in public, and for the last eight years of his reign he was in retirement with some agreeable female companion at his amazing Pavilion at Brighton or at one of the Royal Lodges at Windsor.

For some five years he took no notice of the little Princess Victoria, whom he had last seen at her christening when at the font he and her father had differed about what her name should be, but by 1825 it was highly unlikely that the Duchess of Clarence would have another child, and he was pleased to approve of a further grant of £6000 a year to the Duchess of Kent for the equipment and education of the heiress to the throne. Next year he made a more personal gesture of recognition, and asked the Duchess with her two daughters Princess Feodore and Princess Victoria and Fräulein Lehzen their governess to come down to Windsor for the first time and spend a few days at Cumberland Lodge. The King himself was living at Royal Lodge where also was Lady Conyngham, for whom he had invented the office of Lady Steward, and who had been a great solace to His Majesty in his widower-hood. Her husband, the Lord Steward and their two children were mostly resident there also and this rather quaint domestic arrangement worked admirably. This visit was a wonderful experience for the small girl, and nearly fifty years later she recorded it in a paper of reminiscences of her childhood. The party went over to Royal Lodge, and in spite of his gout and his huge obesity and his

wig (wigs in combination with aprons had caused Princess Victoria to regard Bishops with intense horror), she found him a very dignified and charming person. "Give me your little paw," he said to her : and then in turn he gave her a miniature of himself set in diamonds, which was an Order to be worn by Princesses on the left shoulder, and Lady Conyngham pinned it on for her. His kiss, as she remembered in later years was rather dreadful, for his face was covered with grease-paint. Next day, the same family party from Kensington, driving to Virginia Water, where the King had been embellishing the beauties of nature, met him in his phaeton going there with the Duchess of Gloucester. He stopped and said "Pop her in," and there Victoria sat between him and Aunt Gloucester. Her mother was "much frightened," but Victoria was delighted, and they drove to the Fishing Temple where was a large barge, and they all embarked on it and fished. Another barge followed them with a band on board which made music for the anglers. The King paid particular attention to-day to Princess Feodore who was a very lovely girl : satirical people said that perhaps he would marry her. Then came tea with peaches in a cottage by the lake, after dinner the party again went to Royal Lodge, and there was more music in the Conservatory which was lit up by coloured lamps. At the end of one piece the King told his niece to choose the next tune, and she chose "God Save the King." Altogether she made a very good impression on "Uncle King," and he asked her down to Windsor again next year, and shewed a certain interest in the household at Kensington Palace by creating Fräulein Lehzen a Baroness of his kingdom of Hanover. Then there was a sad parting ; her grandmother, the Dowager Duchess of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, who was keeping a very careful eye on her two grand-

-children, Albert and the Mayflower, came to spend several months at Claremont with her son Prince Leopold, and when she left she took her other grand-daughter, the lovely Princess Feodore, back to Coburg with her.*

By this time, the education of Princess Victoria, amply provided for by that fresh grant of £6000 a year, had become almost intensive. It was an age in which young ladies in England were assiduous in accomplishments, and it was only right that the Princess should excel them all. They must be able to sit down and play the piano of an evening, or to stand up and sing. Everyone sang: even King George sang, and when Maestro Rossini, the great operatic composer came to England, he was sent for to Windsor, and sang duets with the Sovereign. And young ladies must be equally ready to dance with grace and modesty and they must be able to sketch in water-colours and draw with pencil. "Touches" were taught: there was an oak-tree touch, and a beech-tree touch and a birch-touch, so that from these significant handlings of the pencil their friends would be able to identify the species of the vegetable. Languages were also a necessary equipment: German and French must spring to adolescent lips. With German the small Princess had no difficulty, for she was surrounded by natives of that nationality, but when it came to learning English her German accent must be eliminated. So Mr. Sale, the organist at St. Margaret's, Westminster, taught her singing and playing, and Mr. Westall R. A. taught her drawing, and Mlle. Bourdin taught her to dance the minuet, and M. Grandineau to acquire the true French accent, and Mr. Steward of Westminster School taught her English grammar (which she never really mastered), and arithmetic. This troupe of specialists, who came daily to Ken-

* Letters, 1st Series, 1, pp. 11-13.

sington Palace, were under the supervision of a general Minister of Education, the Reverend George Davys.* He had begun his instruction when Victoria was only four years old, and as the girl grew formed a very high estimate of her abilities.

But a greater responsibility rested on the new Hanoverian Baroness than on any of these, for she was "personal attendant" on the Princess, and it was her task to correct not merely faults in her compositions but faults in her character. That was an onerous task, for, as Queen Victoria told Lord Melbourne in one of her immense colloquies with him after her accession, "Lehzen had often said that she *never* had seen such a passionate and naughty child as I was : still that I had never told a falsehood though I knew I would be punished. Lord Melbourne said, 'That is a fine character' : and I added that Lehzen entrusted me with things which I knew she would not like me to tell again, and that when I was ever so naughty, I never threatened to tell or ever did tell them. Lord Melbourne observed 'That is a fine trait' " : on which, with a touch of humour, the Queen recorded that she was sorry she had said so much about herself.† So Lehzen had something to work on : she was more fortunate than the tutors of her charge's uncles, for, as Uncle George told Lady Spencer, "I do not tell the truth, and my brothers do not tell the truth : the Queen taught us to prevaricate" : and indeed he almost exceeded prevarication when he asserted that he rode the winner of the Gold Cup at Goodwood, and had been present at the battle of Waterloo.‡ But truth and a sense of honour were admirable foundations, and they were certainly as firmly laid in Victoria's character as her quick

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, pp. 21, 22.

† *Childhood of Queen Victoria*, 1, p. 280

‡ Possibly the King was only alluding to the fact that he had ridden over the field of Waterloo with the Duke of Wellington.

temper, and Lehzen, perceiving that the little girl was extremely affectionate and would do anything for those she was fond of, set out to make herself loved, and, for disciplinary purposes, feared. "I adored, though I was greatly in awe of her," was her pupil's statement of her childish relations with the Baroness. For her mother she felt less adoration and certainly more fear. Years afterwards on her mother's death she found, with pangs of bitterest remorse, the diary which revealed to her for the first time how truly devoted and tender was the Duchess's love for her, for she had never suspected it. As a child she was ill at ease with her: her mother was the arch-disciplinarian, who sat with her, like a school inspector, during her lessons to see that the class behaved itself. She arranged for the class being under constant supervision during the day, she had strict eye to its table-manners at meals, and saw that it ate its everlasting mutton with propriety, and at night the class slept in her room. For companions the Princess had Victoire Conroy and the beloved Feodore until she was taken away to be married, and high born little ladies sometimes came to tea (tea was a treat) and played with her dolls' house. She referred in later years to her "sad and lonely childhood," but it would appear to have been much the same as that of any other little girl of the upper classes, who was being very carefully brought up by a lonely mother, and who had the misfortune (though in this case there was a bright lining to that) of not having any brothers. One inmate of the Palace, Sir John Conroy, the Controller of the Household and her mother's confidential secretary, she detested.

It is difficult to believe that at the age of ten Princess Victoria was still completely unaware that after the death of Uncle George and Uncle William she would be Queen of England. But according to a memorandum written by

her mother just before her eleventh birthday she was still in ignorance. The Duchess wanted to be satisfied that her daughter's education for which she had the sole responsibility was being wisely conducted, and she wrote to the Bishops of London and Lincoln about it. At the end of this document she stated : "I must conclude by observing that as yet the Princess is not aware of the station that she is likely to fill. She is aware of its duties and that a Sovereign should live for others. . ." * But, coupled with the English History she had learned from the Reverend George Davys, this instruction as to the duties of a Sovereign would almost inevitably have suggested something relevant to the mind of this very intelligent child, unless we suppose that these History lessons had not been continued after the reign, say, of George III and that she was unaware that her father was brother to Uncle George. No doubt no formal disclosure had been made, but a child is aware of much more than it has been definitely told. Sir Walter Scott, after dining at Kensington Palace when Victoria was not yet ten years old said, "I suspect, if we could dissect the little heart, we should find that some pigeon or other bird of the air had carried the matter." It is then reasonable to think that the formal disclosure dramatically made to the Princess by Lehzen, when she was eleven, could not have been a complete surprise to her. The story was first recorded many years later by Lehzen herself ; how she put a genealogical tree of Victoria's ancestry into her history book, † and how the girl, when for the first time she understood, said "I will be good." But the Queen herself thought that it had not happened "quite like that."

By now the lives between the Princess and the throne had again diminished. The Duke of York who had given her

* Letters, I, i, pp 15-16.

† Lee, Life of Queen Victoria, pp. 24-25

a pony and hired a Punch and Judy show for her delectation had died in 1827, and King George, after joining fervently in the prayers for his recovery, died in June 1830, and now there remained only the new King, William IV, whose wife, it might be taken for certain, would never have another baby. Immediately on his accession, the Duchess of Kent, mindful of the snubs and slights to which her brothers-in-law had subjected her, determined to show that, as mother of the Heir-Apparent, she was not to be treated like that any longer, and embarked on a series of deplorable indiscretions in order that everyone should realize that she was somebody. The first of these was to write at once to the Duke of Wellington demanding that the King should place a suitable allowance in her control for the proper dignity and maintenance of her daughter. That indeed was the King's intention, but the Duke pointed out to her that until his Civil List was voted by Parliament, it was out of his power to do so. This deeply offended her ; the Duke of Wellington must be put in his place. He wrote to her about the Regency Bill, which enacted that, should Queen Adelaide have another child, she, in the event of the King's death should be appointed Regent, but that if no direct heir was born, the Duchess of Kent should be Regent until Victoria attained her majority on her eighteenth birthday. The Duke offered to explain these provisions personally to the Duchess, but instead of seeing him she wrote a rather rude note requesting him to send her the communication which the King had ordered him to lay before her.

The Coronation approached, and again the Duchess, though in principle she was in the right, managed to put herself in the wrong. The King had arranged that at the ceremony his brothers should take precedence of her and of Princess Victoria. That was undoubtedly incorrect : the Duchess of Kent as widow of the eldest of his brothers

would take the rank of her late husband. Possibly the King did it to annoy her, but he gave her thereby an opportunity, which a wiser woman would have welcomed, of showing a dignified acquiescence. Instead she took offence, and when the Lord High Chamberlain asked her what Peer she would wish to carry her coronet, she returned no answer to his repeated requests until the King himself signed "William R" at the bottom of the third or fourth letter, to show from whom the question came. A few days before the Coronation she took the Princess off to the Isle of Wight, where they stayed at Norris Castle, near which Sir John Conroy had a house called Osborne Cottage : she wrote from there to say that Victoria's health prevented either of them from coming to it. There were floods of tears from the bitterly disappointed little girl, but her Mamma was firm.

These skirmishes lasted throughout King William's reign : there was the Duchess sacrificing all her personal dignity in the struggle to preserve it, and on the other side was her brother-in-law who had the advantage of her in that he had no personal dignity to lose, while the fact that he happened to be King gave him officially an impregnable position. If he "made faces" at her, so to speak, her wiser course would have been to curtsy. But not being wise, she made faces back. Had her brother Prince Leopold been at hand to counsel her, as he had been during the first ten years of her widowhood, he might perhaps have saved her from some of these mistakes, for he had a clearer perception than she of the right way to behave to those who buttered the bread. At the time of King William's accession he had lived in England for fourteen years, enjoying a pleasant annuity of £50,000 and his nice houses in town and country, but he had for the last year or so been considering whether he should accept the offer of the Crown

of Greece. He had hesitated, and though the English Ministry supported him there were many things to weigh carefully, and finance was among them. King George IV who thoroughly disliked him was still alive, and, jealous of his son-in-law becoming a King, warned him that, if he accepted, his annuity and his English houses, kept up for him by the nation, should be plucked from him. King George died while he was still undetermined, but that settled it. It has been supposed that, in case of King William's death, Leopold had hopes that he might be appointed Regent during the minority of his niece. That is not very probable * and the Regency Bill shewed that nothing of the sort would have happened. But to become King of so unsettled and remote a country was a hazardous adventure, and not only was it possible that something better would be offered him, but he had schemes for the House of Coburg to which he could never have given his personal attention if he had been so far away. One life only intervened now between his niece and the throne, and it was wiser to be on the spot. He refused the Crown of Greece and wrote to Princess Victoria saying that his great consolation was that he would not be banished from her and her interests. That was quite sincere, nothing was dearer to Leopold's heart than the future fortunes of his niece.

Then there opened a finer prospect for himself : in 1831 the Crown of Belgium was offered him and he accepted it. In doing so, he could help his family too, for Brussels was quite conveniently near Coburg and London, and he could watch and assist the development of those "cultures," as they might be called, to whose service he would devote his utmost sagacity. He had to abandon the Protestant faith of his fathers, and become a Catholic, but that was no very great rending, and as he must now have a Queen, he made

* Stockmar, *Memours*, i, p. 118.

a good marriage in espousing Princess Louise Marie, daughter of King Louis Philippe of France. As for his English revenues and property, he got terms far better than the confiscation with which his father-in-law had threatened him. His debts of £83,000 were paid for him, and instead of giving up the whole of his annuity, he retained till his death in 1865 £10,000 a year for the upkeep of Claremont and its gardens, the produce of which he sold in the vegetable and fruit markets of London. He did not therefore completely shake the gold-dust of England off his feet, and we must surely admire his handling of this situation : never before in the history of England had a foreign monarch owned an estate on its soil which the nation kept up for him. Though he could not after 1831 see so much of Victoria, he often paid visits to England, and maintained a constant and parental correspondence with his niece, and had a place in her affections hardly second to that of Baroness Lehzen.

But with his departure to Belgium his restraining influence over the unwise antagonism of his sister to King William was unfortunately relaxed, and until Victoria came of age in 1837, the skirmishes between the two were of the most grotesque sort. The King wished to see more of the Heir-Apparent : that was sufficient reason for the Duchess to assert her guardianship, and put all possible difficulties in the way. She refused to be decently polite to the King's children by Mrs. Jordan : if Lord Munster appeared at breakfast when she was staying at Windsor, she complained to Queen Adelaide, who was genuinely anxious to be on friendly terms with her, that she had understood that none of the irregulars would be there. In 1832 she started making autumn progresses through the kingdom with her daughter accompanied by the inevitable Sir John Conroy : in itself the idea was admirable, for they stayed at inns or

at big country-houses such as Chatsworth or Holkham or Burghley, and the Princess got to see the country and the homes of her future subjects. But the Duchess took constant opportunity to give offence to the King : he had given her permission, for instance, to use the Royal Yacht, and she insisted that her landings and embarkations should be saluted with the firing of guns. Lord Grey, at the King's command, asked her to give orders herself (so that she should not feel snubbed) that she did not wish this continual popping to go on, but she refused. "Conroy," she wrote, "could not recommend her to give way on this point." So an Order in Council had to change the regulations, and henceforth the Royal Standard was only saluted when the King or Queen was on board.

The Princess was thirteen when these tours began, and her mother told her she must now begin to keep a Journal in a book she gave her for that purpose, describing what she saw and did, and the journal begun in 1832 was continued till her death nearly seventy years later. Up till her accession these entries were evidently made with the knowledge that her mother would cast a critical eye over them. Many entries were jotted down first in pencil, no doubt *en route*, and we may imagine Lehzen reading them over and perhaps suggesting omissions or amplifications before they were inked in to be shewn Mamma. The first day of this tour was merely travel and we read :

"We left K. P. (Kensington Palace) at 6 minutes past 7. The road and scenery beautiful. 20 minutes past 9. We have just changed horses at Barnet, a very pretty little town. . . The country is very bleak and chalky. 12 minutes to 12. We have just changed horses at Brickhill. The country is very beautiful about here. . . At ½ past 5 we arrived at Meriton : and we are now going to dress for dinner. ½ past eight. I am undressing to go to bed.

Mamma is not well and is lying on the sofa in the next room. I was asleep in a minute in my own little bed which travels always with me." *

But horizons were enlarging : exciting things happened. Mamma received an address at Carnarvon ; they embarked on the *Emerald* and a salute was fired : the *Emerald* broke down and they were towed by a steam-packet called *Paul Pry* which saluted four times in the day (for the Order in Council forbidding these constant salvos had not yet gone forth). Rosa, her pony, went an enormous rate : she literally flew. Eaton Hall was described with the conscientiousness of an official guide-book. The guests at Chatsworth, eighteen in number, were all given by name, but the beauties of the house, its mirrors, its statues, its pictures, its carpets were too numerous to describe in detail. . . . At Oxford they had a most enthusiastic reception and Sir John Conroy was made a Doctor of Civil Law, and received the freedom of the City.

A habit was forming, and a most valuable one, which the girl practised to the end of her life, that of accurate and minute observation of what was passing round her, trivial and important alike ; and we can see with what an admirable natural memory she was gifted. The writer's style also was already completely formed and never changed ; for minute recollection, for plain unvarnished narration, wholly devoid of all attempt at literary form it was precisely the same at the age of thirteen as when she wrote *Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands*, and *More Leaves*. No one could have doubted, had all these been unsigned manuscripts of unknown origin, that they were by the same hand. Thirty-five years later the Queen wrote :

"Slept soundly till half-past seven, and heard that the

* *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, i, pp. 43, 44.

luggage had only arrived at half-past four in the morning. Breakfasted with Louise, who made my coffee beautifully with Brown who waited at breakfast. Ross coming in and out with what had to be carried. It rained soon after I got up, and continued raining till near eleven. I read and wrote etc. At half-past eleven, it having cleared, I rode up the small narrow glen, down which flows a 'burnie' (called the Garden Burn), the banks covered with fern and juniper, heather and birch, etc., past the kitchen garden. . . Home by twenty minutes to one. The day became very fine and warm." *

HER tastes began to develop, and with them enthusiasms expressed with a profusion of italics and capital letters. This was in emulation of Uncle Leopold who freely employed these aids to emphasis, and Victoria adopted it for good. Dancing was one of these enthusiasms, music was another, and many were the Saturday evenings, after the tour was over, when she was taken to the opera, where a ballet was always a part of the programme. There was the ballet of *Kenilworth* one night (home at 20 minutes past nine), on another there was one scene out of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, one act of *Fidelio* ("shockingly performed"), a song by Rubini, and the ballet *La Sonnambula*, in which Mlle. Pauline Leroux looked "QUITE LOVELY" (home at ½ past eleven). There grew an enthusiasm for animals, ponies and dogs in especial, but never cats. There was "sweet little Rosy" (or Rosa) her pony, and "dear sweet little Dash," a King Charles spaniel given to her mother by Sir John Conroy; twice in one day Victoria dressed up this unfortunate animal "in a scarlet jacket and blue trousers." The King, who, with intervals of violent exasperation, was anxious to be as pleasant to the Duchess as

* More Leaves, p. 65.

she would allow him came to dinner at Kensington Palace one night with that sinister brother Uncle Cumberland, and when the Princess's fourteenth birthday came round ("How *very old!*" she recorded) he gave a Juvenile Ball for her at St. James's Palace, leading her in to supper and she sat between him and Aunt Adelaide, and her health was drunk. She danced eight quadrilles and came home at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 12.

Cousins, male cousins on the Coburg side, began to appear. The first of these were the Princes Alexander and Ernest of Wurtemberg, sons of her mother's sister Antoinette, and they stayed for a month with Aunt Kent. "They are both *extremely tall*," the Journal records; "Alexander is *very handsome* and Ernest has a *very kind expression*." Victoria's half-brother Charles of Leiningen was of the party, and they all went cruising in the Solent, and stayed at Norris Castle, where two days of weeping had been spent because she was not allowed to go to Uncle William's Coronation. Southampton was in gala for Mamma, and the Corporation presented her with an address. But next day (awaking at 6 and getting up at $\frac{1}{2}$ past 6) there was a sad breakfast, for the dear cousins left at $\frac{1}{4}$ to 8. "We shall miss them at *breakfast*, at *luncheon*, at *dinner*, *riding*, *driving*, *sailing*, *walking*, in *fact everywhere*." The pleasure of going on board the *Victory*, of being saluted again, of seeing the spot where Nelson died, of sipping the water in the ship's tanks (two years in storage), of tasting the sailors' dinner and their grog, all of which were excellent was quite eclipsed by the absence of *dear* Alexander and *dear* Ernest. The Duchess continued her Royal progress to Plymouth, and received the usual address from the Mayor; and Victoria records with an odd touch of pomposity the call which she and her mother paid on "their Majesties the Queen of Portugal and the Duchess of Braganza (her stepmother),"

who were embarking for Lisbon after a visit to Windsor. Her Majesty of Portugal, Donna Maria da Gloria (whom Uncle Leopold was already observing with a Coburg eye, for she would presently be wanting a husband) was only one month older than Victoria but, since she was a Queen, "she was very kind to me." The visitors remained standing till their Majesties desired them to sit down. . .

So this artless Journal proceeds. The writer was evidently enjoying herself enormously, for again and again the record for the day, in capital letters or italics, ends "I was very much amused." Education was broadening, for Professor T. Griffiths lectured to her on Physics, and spoke "of Alchymy, viz : Transmutation of Metals" and the Elixir of Life and the Universal solvent, and conductors and Non-Conductors of Heat and Cohesion and Capillary Attraction, and that was very amusing too. All new experience was welcome to that eager little mind, which absorbed it like a sponge, and recorded it with gusto.*

* *Girlhood of Queen Victoria*, 1, pp. 15-90.



CHAPTER III

I

AS YET the political affairs of her native land had not been brought to the notice of the Princess : indeed until the time of her accession to the throne there is not one mention of Whigs or Tories in these pages. When she was fifteen her beloved Feodore, whom she had not seen for six years, came on a visit to her mother, with her husband Prince Ernest Hohenlohe and her two children, and the King asked them all down to Windsor for Ascot. In the autumn the Duchess took a house at St. Leonards for three months, receiving, as usual, a loyal address from the Mayor and Corporation. The air was brisk after the fogs of Kensington : there were nice walks ; she liked to see the people strolling on the Esplanade, and for events they had a carriage accident (in which the Princess's first thought was to get Dashy out of the rumble) and a wreck. She described the grief of the widows of the drowned men, "decent looking, tidy and nice people," and their gratification at the recovery of the bodies. Mr. Davys, now promoted to be Dean of Chester, gave her daily lessons, and other tutors came down, but besides these she made employments for herself, reading French History and Racine with Lehzen out of hours : and again there emerges a trait most characteristic of her maturity : "*I love to be employed ; I hate to be idle.*" The beauties of Nature began to take her eye, and we have a very careful word-

-picture of sunrise : "The rising began by the sky being quite pink and blending softly into a bright blue, and the sun rose by degrees from a little red streak to a ball of red copper. . ." For the description of sunset that follows we might substitute, without fear of being caught tampering with records, a word-picture which she wrote of the same phenomenon ten years afterwards : "As the sun went down the scenery became more and more beautiful, the sky crimson, golden-red and blue, and the hills looking purple and lilac, most exquisite." *

Then came the greatest treat yet, for in commemoration of her coming sixteenth birthday the Duchess gave a superlative concert at Kensington Palace with all the stars of Opera singing : Grisi, Rubini, Malibran and Lablache. On the day itself her "present-table" was loaded with gifts : Dashy gave her an ivory basket full of barley-sugar and chocolate, and, in addition to the concert, her mother gave her an enamel bracelet containing a lock of her hair, and Feodore another, also with hair, and Sir John Conroy a writing case, and Mr. Hatchard the bookseller a prayer-book : there were so many that she forgot, except in post-script, to mention the sapphire and diamond earrings from the King and Queen. But the best of all the presents was the concert, and for almost the only time in the Journal the Duchess became "*dear Mamma*." The day was Sunday, and Dean Davys preached a very appropriate sermon (Joshua 24, 15). Sixteen seemed a great age, and gave rise to most edifying reflections and resolutions : "I feel that the two years to come till I attain my 18th birthday are the most important of any almost. I now only begin to appreciate my lessons, and hope from this time on to make great progress." †

* Leaves, p. 39.

† Girlhood, I, p. 116.

BUT what a strange fascination the details and rites of death had for this gay little girl ! There came news of the death of Countess Mensdorff, her mother's sister. She had stayed at Kensington Palace two years ago for a week, and the diarist explained how she would have felt the loss very deeply, even if she had not known her at all, for all her mother's relations, known or unknown, were dear to her ; then, with a morbid gusto, always afterwards characteristic of her, but curious in a very lively girl, she luxuriated in the details of her loss. Uncle Mensdorff had risen at four o'clock that morning, and was pleased to see his wife sleeping so quietly, but her maid perceived that she was not breathing, and then Uncle "saw the dreadful truth. She slept truly but she slept never more to wake !" . . . "They say that a smile was imprinted on her countenance when she died, and that she looked more friendly after her death than she had done some time previous to it" . . . The funeral was splendid : thousands came from near and far to follow her to her last abode where she will suffer no more grief and pain. Military bands played funereal music : nuns carried burning tapers : the coffin and vault were covered with flowers. "Time may weaken but it can never efface the memory of this loss" ; but how she enjoyed putting it all in her Journal ! The death of the prima donna Malibran awoke the same awed attraction. "I can still hardly believe it possible that she whom I can still see before me, as she was at our concert, dressed in white satin, so merry and lively, and whose pathetic voice when speaking I can hear is now in the silent tomb." *

The same summer (1835) the Princess was confirmed, and we get a glimpse of that very sincere, very uncomplicated sense of religion which remained her steadfast and unfailing guide throughout her life. "I felt deeply re-

* *Girlhood*, I, pp. 123, 124, 171.

pentant for all that I had done which was wrong and trusted in God Almighty to strengthen my heart and mind ; and to forsake all that is bad and follow all that is virtuous and right." That "foi de charbonnier" was always hers : she never took the slightest interest in dogmas and ecclesiastical rites and theological minutiae, and the old lady of nearly eighty who considered M. Comte's views "so very extraordinary," and thought no more about such stuff, was exactly the same simple and uncritical Christian as the girl of sixteen had been. Three days afterwards she received her first Communion, and up till the day of her death she would have endorsed what she wrote in her Journal then : "It is a very solemn and impressive ceremony, and when one recollects and thinks that we take it in remembrance of the death of our blessed Saviour, one *ought*, nay *must* feel deeply impressed with holy and pious feelings !" * After that day she received the Sacrament twice every year, spending the whole day, if possible, in quiet seclusion. Neither ecstasy nor doubt ever troubled her : the one was as incomprehensible to her as the other.

The *villegiatura* this summer began with a stay at Tunbridge Wells ; then came one of the Royal autumn tours, beginning with a visit to the Archbishop of York. There was a performance of the *Messiah* in the Minster, but Victoria found it "very heavy and tiresome," Italian music, Rossini and Donizetti, was her choice. Her idol Grisi sang, and she was triumphant and electrifying, but what a pity she wore an ugly dingy foulard dress and a frightful little pink bonnet. After dinner, the Princess, like all well brought up young ladies of that day, had to sing, too, and was frightened to death.

They went from York to Wentworth, to the Doncaster races, to Belvoir and to Lord Exeter's house at Burghley,

* *Girlhood*, i, pp 124, 127

where the Duchess received an address read by her host. It spoke of the Princess as "destined to mount the throne of these realms" which the King found tactless, and Conroy handed him the Duchess's answer as if she were Regent already and he her Prime Minister. Then they hurried back to Ramsgate to meet the beloved Uncle Leopold and Aunt Louise, who were coming to their English country-house at Claremont. What happiness to "throw herself in the arms of that *dearest* of Uncles, who has always been to me like a father, and whom I love so very dearly." And Aunt Louise whom she had never seen before was "such a perfection!" But the greatest perfection just now was Lehen. "She is the most *affectionate, devoted, attached* and *disinterested* friend I have, and I love her most *dearly!*" *

II

THE stay at Ramsgate was prolonged into January 1836. One reason at any rate for this was that there were considerable alterations going on at Kensington Palace, which was for the present uninhabitable, and when the family returned Princess Victoria found the house amazingly altered and their quarters much enlarged. There were two staircases instead of one; the long gallery built by William III was cut up into three rooms; the Duchess's new bedroom, in which the Princess still slept, was "very large and lofty" with a maid's room and a dressing-room adjoining. Beyond was a new sitting-room for Victoria, and next to that a new school-room, where she did her lessons with the staff of tutors now under the general superintendence of the Duchess of Northumberland. These alterations, comprising an addition of seventeen new rooms, which provided the Princess with a suite of her own, though not with

* Girlhood, 1, pp 136, 138. Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 41, 42.

a bedroom to herself, had been ordered on the sole authority of the Duchess of Kent. The King (whose property, after all, the Palace was), had not sanctioned them, possibly he had even refused to allow her to make them. So she acted without his leave, and even when the alterations had been made she left the King to find out about them himself, which he did, disastrously, about six months later.

The year 1836 opened propitiously for the House of Coburg. Victoria's first cousin Ferdinand, the eldest son of her Uncle Ferdinand of Coburg, now nineteen years old, was married by proxy on New Year's Day to Donna Maria da Gloria, Queen of Portugal.* Her Majesty, it may be remembered, had been "very kind" to Victoria two years before. King Leopold, with Stockmar as confidential agent, had been largely instrumental in arranging this excellent match, and Victoria in her Journal paid a just tribute to him: "He is ever ready, and ever *most able* to assist his family." In anticipation of his success in securing for his nephew the position of Prince Consort to the Queen of Portugal, Uncle Leopold had made an exhaustive study of the country, its people, its government, its Constitution, and, with the assistance of Stockmar, had written a substantial Memorandum called "Directions and Advices" for his guidance, for he claimed to have made a science of Sovereignty.

In March the young Prince Consort with his father and his brother Augustus came to England on a visit to King William, and Victoria and her mother (whose alterations at Kensington Palace were still undetected) were asked to Windsor to meet them. Donna Maria had sent the Princess the Portuguese Order of Sta. Isabella, and Ferdinand delivered it. She was immensely taken with her two cousins: they were so handsome, they had such sweet expressions,

* Girlhood, i, p. 144.

and they were both clever and good. Ferdinand had brought his Uncle's "Directions and Advices" with him and gave them to Victoria to read. A point which, rather curiously, she particularly noticed was that the Queen should associate her Prince Consort with herself at her Councils at which he should always be present.* The whole document, especially the section "Observations Générales," aroused her highest admiration. What a counsellor was Uncle Leopold! "He is so clever and governs Belgium so beautifully that he is a model for every Sovereign, and will contribute to the happiness and re-organization of Portugal as he has done to Belgium" . . . There was surely purpose behind this loan of Uncle Leopold's manuscript: a delicate hint, perhaps, that he would be ready to do the same for England, when the time came, as he was doing for Portugal. Uncle Leopold certainly thought of everything, but it would be a mistake to imagine that Augustus was intended for Victoria. He and the Coburg family generally had long ago made their choice for her of yet another nephew, whom she was very soon to see for the first time.

Their choice was Prince Albert, younger son of Duke Ernest of Saxe-Coburg and Princess Louise of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg. She had married this man of innumerable infidelities while she had not yet attained her seventeenth birthday. Her elder son Ernest was born in 1818, her younger son, as we have seen, on August 26, 1819. Duchess Louise was left much to her own devices, she was young, she was of gay disposition, and as early as July 1820 when Albert was not a year old, there had been something of a scandal at Coburg, which she described with a blue-eyed childlike innocence to her great friend Augusta von Studnitz. One of her mother-in-law's ladies had been making mischief. She had accused her of being in love with

* Girlhood, 1, p. 155

the Chamberlain of the Court, Count Solms, and hinted at his devotion to her. Though such a notion, wrote Louise, made Count Solms "die of laughter," Duke Ernest was not amused when he heard of it. "If he had been sensible," she continued, "he would have laughed also, but he took it seriously and was angry with me. . . Now he watches me as he has never done before, and he misconstrues everything." But presently there were more incidents capable of misconstruction : there was a riding-master, who "sighed and languished like a turtle-dove" : there was a handsome boy of seventeen who lay at her feet, and climbed a tree to look in at her windows (and Louise thought that charming of him), and finally there was Lieutenant von Hanstein, on account of whose attentions Duke Ernest got a separation from his wife in 1824 and she had to leave Coburg and never saw her children again.* A divorce followed in 1826, after which she married her lover and died in 1831.

Albert was thus motherless before he was five years old. He was an extraordinarily pretty child with fair curls and his mother's blue eyes and with feminine though in no way effeminate instincts which corresponded to his girlish beauty. He disliked, even as a baby, being in charge of women, and at the age of three was taken out of the hands of a female nurse and looked after by Herr Florschütz who remained his tutor till he was eighteen. "Albert adore son oncle Léopold," his mother wrote of him before the separation, "lui fait des yeux doux, l'embrasse à chaque moment." Indeed, as a child, he had a horror of the sex that should have attracted him, for when at a children's fancy-dress ball a small girl was brought up to him as a partner, he yelled with disgust and dismay.† At the age of six he started a diary, which reads like that of a very sensitive and consci-

* Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, pp. 16, 17

† Grey, *Early years of the Prince Consort*, pp. 16, 102.

entious girl. "My cough was worse. I was so frightened that I cried. . . We recited and I cried because I could not say my repetition, because I had not paid attention. . . We went down to dear Papa, and I took my needles and rings down with me. . . I was to recite something, but I did not wish to do so : that was not right : naughty !" Hardly a day passed without weeping or repentance ; and at this rather advanced age, he begged his father to bring him a doll that nodded its head. Though once or twice, more robustly, he fought his brother, we regret to find that he was sorry afterwards and recorded "that was not right." *

Music already was a passion with him, and remained so ; what also remained with him, and was sometimes a trial in later life, was his tendency to get irresistibly drowsy of an evening : as a small boy nothing, not even supper, could keep him awake after seven ; he would fall off his chair as he was eating and sleep peacefully on the floor.† Then a vein of gaiety developed ; he was an admirable mimic, and a vein of mischief appeared taking the form of practical jokes. He got his tutor in chemistry to fill a number of small glass bulbs with sulphuretted hydrogen, which he hurled into the boxes and pit of the theatre and screamed with laughter when they burst and drowned the audience in an appalling stench. At a party at his father's house he stole to the ladies' cloak-room and stuffed the pockets of the cloak which his cousin Princess Caroline of Reuss-Ebersdorff had left there with soft cheese, but did not think it funny when in retaliation she filled his bed with frogs.‡

Then both gaiety and girlishness alike were overscored by a passion for learning and self-improvement. At the

* Grey, *Early Years*, pp. 32-35.

† *Ibid.*, p. 96

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 103-105.

age of thirteen he framed a tremendous time-table for his own lessons. They began at six every morning and occupied eight hours every day : it is interesting to observe that there are far more hours for studying English than for any other subject. As diversions he and his brother collected moths and fossils and flowers for their joint museum.

When he was fifteen, he and his brother were confirmed together. The day before the rite they were examined by the Court chaplain on religious topics, in the presence of a host of relatives, the Royal Household, Ministers of State, Government Officials and deputations from towns and villages round. This viva-voce examination lasted for an hour, and the bearing and the theology of both Princes gave great satisfaction. Next day the rite took place in the Chapel, and after a tour to the houses of various relations they returned to Coburg and resumed their studies, till the time came that, with their father, in this spring of 1836, they went to England.

From her letters to Uncle Leopold this year, it is clear that Princess Victoria knew the destiny he proposed for her, but Uncle William knew it too, and did not approve, for he had another suitor for the hand of his niece, Alexander, the younger son of the Prince of Orange. History in fact was repeating one of its own situations in its self-plagiarizing manner, for in 1814 the Prince Regent had his own candidate for the hand of his only daughter Princess Charlotte, who, had she lived, would have succeeded him on the Throne, and that candidate was the Prince of Orange. But Charlotte would have none of him and married Prince Leopold. The situation was being staged again now in the next generation : again a husband was sought for the Princess who was heiress to the Throne, and while Leo-

pold's candidate was this Coburg first-cousin, King William favoured the son of that Prince of Orange whom Albert's Uncle had cut out twenty years before.

Leopold had arranged that his brother Ernest should bring his two sons Ernest and Albert to stay with their Aunt Kent at Kensington in May of this year, but only a day or two before they started he got a half-official communication from England saying that it would be "*highly desirable*" that this Coburg visit should not take place. Meantime, King William had asked the Prince of Orange and his two sons to Windsor for precisely the same purpose, and he even threatened to forbid the landing of the Coburg party in England at all. Upon which Leopold wrote so furious a letter to his niece that he thought it wiser not to entrust it to the post at all, but sent it by special messenger. He had supposed (he witheringly wrote) that the days of slavery were over even in the British colonies, but no ! Victoria was "*a little white slavey in England* for the pleasure of the Court ! . . . Oh, consistency and political or *other honesty* where must one look for you !" But King William could not, of course, prevent the Coburg invasion, though, as Leopold opined, he would doubtless "*in his passion for the Oranges, be excessively rude to your relations,*"* and the Coburgs came.

Of all the pairs of young male cousins, Alexander and Ernest Wurtemberg, Ferdinand and good Augustus, Ernest and Albert, Victoria at once settled that she loved the last pair "*much more dearly* than any other cousins in the *world*." Albert was the handsomest, and, though not seventeen, was as tall as his brother : both were clever, but he was the cleverer and the most "reflecting" : both drew beautifully but he the more beautifully, and both were "*very very* merry and gay and happy, like young people

* Letters, I, 1, pp. 47, 48 and note

ought to be," but Albert's wit and fun was the most unfailing.* The King was not so rude, in his passion for the Oranges, as Leopold had expected: the Princes dined with him twice and attended two Royal concerts,† and when the Duchess of Kent gave a ball at Kensington Palace in honour of Victoria's seventeenth birthday all the Oranges came, and Victoria danced quadrilles with the two young Oranges as well as her cousins, but finished up at half-past three in the morning with Albert for her partner in a country-dance.‡ Nothing marred the delight of those three weeks while "i miei carissimi cugini" were at Kensington, and very bitter were Victoria's tears when they left. Uncle Ernest took with him a note from his niece to Uncle Leopold, which showed how warmly she embraced the destiny which she already knew he had shaped for her:

"I must thank you, my beloved Uncle, for the prospect of *great* happiness you have contributed to give me in the person of dear Albert. Allow me then, my dearest Uncle, to tell you how delighted I am with him in every way. He possesses every quality that could be desired to make me perfectly happy. He has besides the most pleasing and delightful exterior you can possibly see. I have only now to beg you, my dearest Uncle, to take care of the health of one now so *dear* to me, and to take him under *your special* protection. I hope and trust that all will go on prosperously and well on this subject of so much importance to me." § . . . Laus Deo! The Oranges had once again been wiped off the map of England by the Coburgs!

Albert, it is to be feared, had not found the visit so charged with rapture as his prospective bride. He missed

* Girlhood, I, pp. 157-161. In a memorandum made by the Queen in 1854, she says that Albert was much shorter than his brother. (Early Years, p. 216.)

† Early Years of Prince Consort, p. 131.

‡ Letters, I, I, p. 59.

§ *Ibid.*, I, I, p. 49.

his tutor, Herr Florschütz, so he wrote to his step-mother, the climate made him bilious, and these late hours, one, two and even four in the morning made it a frightful struggle to keep awake. His quarters at Kensington Palace were comfortable but cramped, and of his hostess and her daughter all he said was that "Aunt Kent was very kind, and our cousin also is very amiable." In fact Victoria seemed to have made no impression whatever on him, and her superlatives contrast rather discouragingly with his indifference. But the visit was over and after these "fatigues and amusements," Albert was very content to settle down with his brother and Herr Florschütz at Brussels to his studies, and there they remained for nearly a year. Uncle Leopold was at hand, who no doubt got to work on him with regard to his destiny, but all Albert wanted for himself was to sit at his books and acquire knowledge, and when his father asked Ernest and him to spend Christmas at Coburg, he, though the younger, answered for them both, declining. "Such an expedition would require five or six weeks, and our course of study would be quite disturbed by such an interruption." *

The visit of the Coburgs and the extinction of the Oranges had naturally not gratified King William nor rendered him better disposed to the Duchess of Kent. But he, as well as Queen Adelaide, had the kindest feelings towards Victoria, and in August the King asked them both down to Windsor for the celebration of his and the Queen's birthdays, which occurred within a fortnight of each other. The Duchess, a little more self-important than her ordinary at the blighting of the Oranges and the swelling of the bud that promised so well on the Coburg tree, replied that she would remain at Claremont over the Queen's birthday, but would come with Victoria to Windsor for the King's.

* Early Years of Prince Consort, pp. 132-141.

Some information about the extensive encroachments that the Duchess had made in Kensington Palace had by this time reached him, and, being in London on the day she arrived at Windsor, he paid a surprise visit to Kensington and inspected the extent of her trespasses. That was the last straw : for years he had treated her stupid discourtesies with very reasonable mildness, but this was not to be borne. His temper, never of the best, boiled over ; his manners, always of the worst, forsook him and fled, and at the State banquet next day in St. George's Hall, with the Duchess sitting next him, he replied to the toast of his health by the most violent attack on her, alluding to her as "the person now near him." She had treated him with studied insolence, she kept his niece away from Court, and he was not going to stand these impertinences any longer. On and on went the embarrassing tirade of this peppery but justly incensed old man. Such an onslaught in public against a woman who was his guest, before the rest of the Royal Family and his Ministers, was quite inexcusable whatever the offence, but then King William was not a gentleman. However, the Duchess learned her lesson, and from then onwards she and Victoria attended all Court functions when they were bidden.*

Rather shattered, mother and daughter joined the King of the Belgians at Claremont. Evidently he thought that Victoria's accession was not far distant, and "he talked over many important things" with her. Her trust in his wisdom and his perfect advice was pathetic. "He is *so* clever, *so* mild and *so* prudent. *He* alone can give me good advice on *every* thing. . . To hear dear Uncle speak on any subject is like reading a highly instructive book : his conversation is so enlightened, so clear."† But after this week

* Greville Diary, Sept 21, 1836

† Girlhood of Queen Victoria, 1, pp 66-68.

together, he had to get back to Belgium, and his departure occasioned some agonised reflections. She wrote a note to him which would catch him at Dover before he embarked : "Yes, dearest Uncle, it is dreadful in this life, that one is destined, and *particularly unhappy me*, to be almost always separated from those one loves most dearly." But now letters between the two were numerous and his were full of explicit instructions on topics which would soon directly concern her. She must show herself a staunch supporter of Protestantism, for that was the State religion and the Sovereign was the head of the Church : he bade her remark how the acrimony of party-politics was often due not to the true desire of the Government to secure the welfare of the people but to passion, and she must discount that. He lamented the hostility of the infamous Radical press to the Coburgs, whereas England owed him so much. He had done everything to see her prosperous and powerful. He had spared her much trouble and expense "*as without my coming here (to Belgium) very serious complications, war and all the extensive operations connected with it* must have taken place. . . I preserve unity on the Continent, have frequently prevented mischief at Paris . . ." The purpose of these observations is clear : Victoria would soon be in a position to be useful to Belgium. She enthusiastically responded : "You know, I think, my dearest Uncle, that *no* creature on earth *loves* you *more* dearly, or has a higher sense of admiration for you, than I have. . . My love for you exceeds all that words can express." *

As Victoria's eighteenth birthday approached, when, on May 24, 1837, she would come of age, and the chance of her mother's Regency, in case of the King's death, would be extinguished, Uncle Leopold grasped his niece's hand even more firmly. She was invited to Windsor again in April,

* Letters, I, 1, pp. 51-61.

and, in anticipation of the King's proposing that she should have a Household of her own, Leopold advised her very fully about the constitution of it. The Duchess of Northumberland had better be her first Lady : and as Gentleman she must mildly but firmly insist on having good Dean Davys, who had been her tutor ; Baroness Lehzen, though without any official position, must remain about her person in the intimate relation she had always held. She would not need an Equerry, since she would still continue to live with her mother. Leopold knew very well of the estrangement between the two, and recommended Victoria to have no breach with her. He looked upon himself as sole adviser in the management of her affairs, and in order to maintain touch with her sent Stockmar over to England. He told her that he had fully instructed him, and now she would have Stockmar at her elbow. She must always consult him : "it is necessary to accustom you to the thing." * In fact Stockmar was to be Curate in the Vicarage of Claremont.

Princess Victoria's birthday arrived, and the King wrote to her proposing to put £10,000 a year at her own disposal for her establishment. Her mother protested : she thought she ought to have £6000 out of this and Victoria £4000, but an event now imminent put an end to the dispute.

The King was seriously ill, and Leopold almost ceased to advise, and merely issued orders. She had better keep Sir Herbert Taylor (the King's private secretary) as her *official* secretary, but her Uncle was "not quite *decided* on this point. . . Should anything happen to the King, before I can enter into the necessary details, limit yourself to *taking kindly* and in a *friendly manner* the present Administration into your service." She must not be alarmed at the prospect of becoming Queen sooner than she ex-

* Letters, I, 1, p. 58.

pected : Stockmar was with her. Three days before the King's death, her Uncle issued his final instructions. "I shall to-day enter on the subject of what is to be done when the King ceases to live. The moment you get official communication of it, you will entrust Lord Melbourne with the office of retaining the present Administration as your Ministers. You will do this in that honest and kind way which is quite your own, and say some kind things on the subject." This incredible letter concluded : "I have taken into consideration the advantage or disadvantage of my coming over to you *immediately*. The result of my *examen* is that I think it better to visit you later. If, however, you wanted me at any time, I should come in a moment. People might fancy I came to enslave you, while I glory in the contrary : and, thirdly (?) that they might be jealous, or *affect* it at least, of my coming, as if I thought of ruling the realm for *purposes of my own*."

Princess Victoria's answer must have pleased him : "Stockmar has *been* and *is* of the *greatest* possible use, and be assured, dearest Uncle, that he possesses *my most entire confidence*." *

* Letters, I, 1, pp. 51-73.

CHAPTER IV

IT HAD been known at Kensington Palace on June 15 that the King could not live more than a few days, and all lessons were put off except Dean Davys's lectures on the Scriptures. The Princess regretted not having her singing lessons from Lablache, "but duty and *proper feeling* go before all *pleasures*." As she had already confided to her Journal she was devoted to her Coburg relations not only for themselves but because they were relations, but towards her uncles on her father's side she had no such feelings, and her honesty then, as throughout her life, quite uncompromising, forbade her to express any sort of personal grief. She was grateful for his kindness to her and he meant it well, but : "He was odd, very odd and singular, but his intentions were often ill interpreted." There was really nothing more to say about him, and she waited, quite collected, for the end.

The King died very early on the morning of June 20, and that night Victoria recorded the most momentous event of her eighteen years : "I was awoke at 6 o'clock by Mamma, who told me that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Conyngham were here and wished to see me. I got out of bed and went into my sitting-room (only in my dressing-gown) and *alone*, and saw them. Lord Conyngham (the Lord Chamberlain) then acquainted me that my poor Uncle, the King, was no more, and consequently that I am *Queen*."

The interview was quite short, and then the Queen of England went to her room and dressed, then breakfasted while Stockmar talked to her. At nine came Lord Melbourne, "whom I saw in my room, and of course *quite* ALONE as I shall *always* do all my Ministers." She held her first Council : Lord Melbourne and her Uncles Cumberland and Sussex conducted her, but she went in quite alone and was not at all nervous. She gave audiences to four Officers of State "all in my room and alone," and had a second interview with Stockmar. She dined alone : there is a story, perhaps not authentic, that her mother sent to tell her that dinner was ready and that she was waiting. Her messenger returned with a scribbled line, "The Queen will dine alone." A third interview with Stockmar followed, and "a very important and a very *comfortable* conversation" with Lord Melbourne. There was a fourth interview with Stockmar and she said goodnight to her mother, and for the first time in her life she slept alone in her own room. The final entry for that day was "My *dear* Lehzen will ALWAYS remain with me as my friend." *

From six o'clock that morning she had taken up her tremendous destiny with the complete certainty that she was perfectly capable of fulfilling it. She was Queen, so she entirely believed, by the Will of God : nobody else was Sovereign of England, and that constant repetition of the word "alone" in her account of this first day of her reign testified to her appreciation of that no less than to the end of her mother's domestic domination. It is true that now for months the Uncle who for her was the embodiment of wisdom, and whose advice she received as if it had come from the clouds of Sinai, had been diligent in his instructions : it is true that from those admirable (though often mismanaged) annual tours with her mother, she was ac-

* Girlhood, 1, pp. 195-198

customed to face the recognition of crowds and knew very well what correct Royal deportment was, while of late streets had been thronged, as she drove out or went to Drawing Rooms, with crowds eager to see "poor little me," and she had become a very familiar figure to Londoners who were delighted to know that the reigns of her uncles were over, and were ready with a chivalrous welcome for her sex and her youth. But in spite of these aids and reinforcements she must have had a natural instinctive sense of the right way for a Queen to behave. That knowledge enabled her to walk alone into her first Council without the slightest nervousness though those appalling figures, Uncle Cumberland and Uncle Sussex, who had been the bogeys of her childhood, preceded her. Even her plainness of features, and her smallness ("everyone grows but me," she complained to Lord Melbourne) were an asset: beauty and stature might have been distracting features, rousing irrelevant admiration. They would have diverted the attention of her Lords and Ministers from what they must instantly grasp and never forget that here was the Queen of England. Her consciousness of that overscored all else, and she dedicated herself to her destiny with an unfaltering confidence. "Since it has pleased Providence," she wrote in her Journal, "to place me in this station, I shall do my utmost to fulfil my duty towards my country. I am very young and perhaps in many, though not in all things, inexperienced, but I am sure that very few have more real good will and more real desire to do what is fit and right than I have." *

Her duty, private or public, was thus her chief concern. Privately, there was something that must be done at once, and she sent for Sir Frederick Wetherall, who, with Sir John Conroy, had been her father's executor, and made arrange-

* *Girlhood*, 1, p. 196.

ments, as soon as her Civil List was assigned, for the paying off of her father's debts of £50,000 which had been standing over for the last seventeen years, with the accrued interest. She went to Windsor to see Queen Adelaide and learned "the painfully interesting details of the illness and last moments" of her Uncle : to her other Uncles and Aunts on the Hanoverian side she was studiously polite and respectful. She might not like them, but there was no questioning duty, and in the same spirit she continued the allowances the late King had made to his ten illegitimate children. As for the duties of her position, the burden of such were light : they were a pleasure rather than a task. "I have so *many* communications from the Ministers," she wrote, "and from me to them, and I have got so many papers to sign *every* day, that I always have a *very great deal* to do. I *delight* in this work. . . I am determined to employ my time well, so that when I am called away from this world, my end may be a peaceful and happy one." *

Her character was already completely formed, and though for the twenty-one years of her coming married life, she was rapturously content to surrender herself wholly to the guidance of her husband, it was not altered thereby. The loneliness of her early childhood, the domination of her mother to which she had silently and lovelessly submitted, had driven her into herself and generated, in the very core of her nature, a vein of iron. She was full of spontaneous gaiety, she was capable of eager and intense enjoyment, she was warmly affectionate, but she had also this inflexible will which caused her, when once she had come to a conclusion, to be rigidly tenacious of it, and these conclusions were the easier to arrive at because she had not and never would have the slightest touch of intellectual subtlety. Her

* *Girlhood*, 1, pp. 206, 208

mind was that of a supremely honest and capable young woman, with an unfailing supply of the most robust common sense and a total absence of distinction : on to this were grafted the instincts of a Queen. It was an uncomplicated make-up, but likely to be highly efficient, the more so because it was not handicapped by fine perceptions : and it consisted of untiring industry, white hot conscientiousness, great good sense, but little sensitiveness, delight in her duties, self-reliance and an unquestioning belief in God.

She plunged into Sovereignty : she received addresses from the Houses of Parliament : she held a Levée at which three thousand people kissed her hand : she gave audience to Foreign Ambassadors : she chose her Household (or rather Lord Melbourne chose it for her) : she prorogued Parliament : she read despatches that arrived from her Dominion of Canada : her Sister the Empress of Russia sent her the Order of St. Catherine. From the first her Prime Minister won her entire trust and she made up her mind about him at once. "He is indeed a most truly honest, straight-forward and noble-minded man, and I esteem myself most fortunate to have such a man at the head of the Government : a man in whom I can safely place confidence. There are not many like him in this world of deceit." He pleased her no less personally, and she registered : "He is my *friend*, and I know it." Moreover he was a great friend of Lehzen's ("which makes me *more* fond of him still," *), and he had the highest opinion (at present) of Stockmar : we seem to see this intimate Council forming an inner ring under his presidency.

She went to Windsor in August, and at first felt "as if I was not the Mistress of the House, and as if I was to see the poor King and Queen." But these qualms were short-lived ; there was state business to be done and every

* *Girlhood*, 1, pp. 217, 231.

day she rode, which she had not been allowed to do for the last two years. She reviewed her Guards and felt as if she could herself lead her troops into battle, as no doubt she would have done with the utmost gallantry had that been part of her duties. Uncle Leopold and Aunt Louise came to stay with her, and, rather significantly, "I and Mamma" received them. It was "an inexpressible *happiness* and *joy* to me to have those dearest beloved relations with me and in *my own* house." Lord Melbourne was at Windsor and Uncle Leopold was delighted with him: the Queen regretted that she had not time "to take *minutes* of the very interesting and highly important conversations I had with my Uncle and with Lord Melbourne: the sound observations they make and the impartial advice they give me would make a most interesting book," and they were at one in their Politics "which are the *best there are*." They all rode together and there was a thunderstorm, and Aunt Louise's horse bolted and she lost her hat. After dinner the two Queens played chess, and Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, Sir John Hobhouse and Lord Conyngham all advised Victoria, who was a learner, and, as they gave her different advice and were very excited, Belgium beat England and this Council of Ministers. Bitter was her grief at the departure of these beloved relations. "God knows," she wrote to Uncle Leopold, "*how sad, how forlorn* I feel! *How I shall miss you, my dearest dear Uncle! every, every-where!* How I shall miss your conversation! *How I shall miss your protection* out riding! Oh! I feel *very very* sad, and cannot speak of you both without crying!"*

There is something extraordinarily attractive in this self-portrait which so unwittingly she gives of herself in her letters and Journals. Nothing came amiss to this small plain girl, with her ready laughter and her vivacity and

* *Girlhood*, I, pp, 214-225 *Letters*, I, i, p 91.

her frolic welcome to all these new experiences, with her bubbling affection and withal her regal dignity when occasion required. It was the greatest fun being Queen of England, and she recorded that this summer of 1837 was "the *pleasanteest summer* I have ever passed in my life." Not less pleasant also was the prodigious change in her domestic affairs, and there we get a glimpse of that vein of iron that lay below the exuberance. Within a month of her accession she left the "poor old Palace" at Kensington, where she had been born and bred, in which she had had "pleasant balls and *delicious* concerts," but also passed through "painful and disagreeable scenes," and moved into Buckingham Palace, which had never yet been used as a Royal residence. There she made her own dispositions, and instead of sleeping in her mother's bedroom, and having her lessons in a room next door, she had a suite of her own where she slept and sat and saw her Ministers alone. Lehzen's sitting-room was next hers, and her mother had her lodging quite apart, and during this autumn all private intercourse between the two seems to have ceased. The Duchess dined or lunched among other guests, she was of the riding parties at Windsor, she appeared at Drawing Rooms in the Royal Circle, and at public functions ; but in November the usual entries in the Queen's Journal, "breakfasted with Mamma at 9" or "at ¼ p. I breakfasted with Mamma," cease abruptly, and we find instead "breakfasted by myself." We look in vain in letters and Journal for any trace of the Queen's seeking her mother's advice, of consulting her wishes or shewing to her an ordinary filial dependence.

The Duchess felt this complete severance very bitterly, but she was largely to blame for it. For eighteen years she had been day and night an oppressive invigilant, anxious to do her duty by the daughter whose head would be

crowned with Empire, and rightly determined that a very simple and disciplined life should fit her for self-discipline when the day came that there would be nobody who had the power to exact obedience from her. But this education had been conducted hard-handedly : she had stifled the tenderness (which, years later, the Queen was to learn about) and instead of winning the affection of her daughter and governing by love, she had governed by authority alone, with the inevitable result that a fixed resentment had stiffened in the child's mind which stifled any growth of affection. The Duchess's other daughter Feodore had felt that severity perhaps even more keenly, and in 1843 she wrote to Victoria about those days when she lived with her mother from the age of thirteen till her marriage as a time of imprisonment. "Not to have enjoyed the pleasures of youth is nothing, but to have been deprived of all intercourse, and not one cheerful thought in that dismal existence, is very hard. My only happy time was going or driving out with you and Lehzen, then I could speak and look as I liked."* For eighteen years the Queen had suffered that daily domination, though, to be sure, she often vastly enjoyed herself, and now, with that vein of iron, she repaid it by a complete ignoring of her who had exercised it. She had added it up, and with the ruthless justice of youth she squared the account.

There was another account to be settled. From the dawn of memory the Conroy family had been familiar to her. Sir John had been her father's equerry, and one of his executors, and on the Duke of Kent's death he had become her mother's Secretary and Controller of her Household. He had always accompanied her mother and herself on those Royal progresses, and had seemed to her childish sense to run the show, and to control the Duchess as well as her

* Letters, I, 1, p 18

Household. She resented her mother's dependence on him and his assumption of authority in her house. He came in and out of the drawing-room even when she had Royal guests there : he gave orders on his own responsibility : he took the liberties which a pompous and badly-bred man is apt to take with a lonely woman who has no relation or friend of her own standing to lean on. In the Princess's discreet Journal, which had to pass her mother's scrutiny, the almost daily mention of his name shews how constant was his attendance, and she associated him with the discipline which had been imposed on her. All this made ample cause for her determination to see no more of him when she was her own mistress, and though, after the move into Buckingham Palace, he continued for a while to be the Duchess's Secretary, the Queen determined to get rid of him altogether. Just about the time that she ceased to breakfast with her mother, she recorded in her Journal that she talked over some "*disagreeable business*," otherwise unspecified, with Lord Melbourne who was very kind about it. This probably refers to Sir John Conroy, for next month she wrote to the Prime Minister saying that she thought he had "acted with the greatest judgment with respect to Sir John Conroy, and highly approves the course he intends pursuing."* Sir John was given a pension of £3000 a year and a baronetcy in reward for his long service to the Royal Family, but Windsor and Buckingham Palace knew him no more.

This estrangement between the Queen and her mother long existent, and accentuated by the new dispositions in Buckingham Palace, with the Queen's equally long dislike of Conroy, underlined by her dismissal of him, was naturally grist for the scandal-monger, and Charles Greville, Clerk of the Privy Council, made note of it in his amusing and

* Letters, I, 1, p. 99.

malignant Diary. He never let an opportunity slip of saying something disagreeable both about the Duchess of Kent and about Conroy, and his mind might be classed as of the "anti-filter" type : the filter, that is to say, exercising a purifying function on what is put in it, while Greville's mind could be calculated to contaminate it. He made two entries on the subject of Conroy and the Duchess : in the first he recorded that he asked the Duke of Wellington whether he thought that the Duchess was Conroy's mistress, and (according to him) the Duke said that he supposed so. The suggestion therefore came from Greville. His second entry was dated August 19, 1839, and was more explicit : "The cause of the Queen's alienation from the Duchess and hatred of Conroy, the Duke said was unquestionably owing to her having witnessed some familiarity between them. What she had seen she repeated to Baroness Spaeth (Späth : the Duchess's lady-in-waiting) and Spaeth did not hold her tongue, but (he thinks) remonstrated with the Duchess herself on the subject. The consequence was that they got rid of Spaeth, and they would have got rid of Lehzen, too, if they had been able, but Lehzen who knew very well what was going on was prudent enough not to commit herself, and she was, besides, powerfully protected by George IV and William IV so that they did not dare to attempt to expel her." *

Now this account is uncorroborated Greville : none of the very free-spoken and scandalous gutter publications of the day, which made a bee-line for anything discreditable about the Royal Family, have any mention of the connection, and uncorroborated Greville, as a thousand instances shew, is not always to be relied on. Here it is inconsistent in at least one particular, for Baroness Späth was certainly lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent in 1833, and prob-

* Letters, I, 1, p. 122.

-ably was still attached in 1838 and must therefore have been dismissed later. How then could King George IV be efficiently protecting Lehzen? A more serious objection is this. From what we know of the ways of paramours and mistresses, it is quite inconceivable that, if this relationship existed between Conroy and the Duchess, she should have her daughter sleeping in her bedroom until she was eighteen years old. To that there seems no answer, and without further evidence on the subject, we may dismiss Greville's unsupported story (for we only learn of the Duke's remarkable disclosure through him) as a pure fabrication. It was fiction founded on suggestive facts: the facts being that the ménage at Kensington Palace had been for years a very inharmonious Household. There was the Duchess, strictly disciplinarian, allowing her Controller to take great liberties, much as Queen Victoria in her widowhood allowed her favourite gillie, John Brown, to treat her with a brusqueness she would not have stood from anybody else, and as in the third generation the Dowager Empress Frederick permitted without displeasure Count Seckendorff's atrocious manners to her. In the other camp was the young Princess entrenched behind Baroness Spath, till she was dismissed, and Baroness Lehzen, both of whom adored her. There were plenty of bricks here for the gossips to build a scandal, and the straw was supplied when on her accession the Queen kept her mother at arm's length and dismissed Sir John.

So the Queen breakfasted alone and revelled in her independence no less than in her dignities. Her first big public appearance to her people was when "*in all my finery*" she attended the Lord Mayor's banquet in the great State carriage drawn by eight of the famous "cream-coloured" horses. George I had brought that equine strain

along with his mistresses from Hanover, and George IV when he went there for his second coronation had replenished the stock. They were scarcely carriage-horses ; they were half *percherons* and their cart-horse blood admirably served the stately foot-pace progress of that ponderous fairy-story wain with its glass sides, and its gilded crowns and tritons. It took two hours to get from Buckingham Palace to the Guildhall, and the tremendous reception that the girl met with brought home to her more vividly and intimately than ever what it meant to be Queen. Civic ceremonies followed, she knighted the Sheriffs among whom was a Jew, Mr. Moses Montefiore. Never before in English history had a Jew received the knighthood : the Queen thought this quite right, and the precedent was made. Then came dinner which lasted well over two hours, and she returned home not in state, but in a landau with a pair of horses and no guard, a young girl with a bad headache, passing through the thronged streets, Queen of her people. She hoped there had been no accidents in those vast crowds : "I cannot say," she wrote in her Journal, "how gratified, and how *touched* I am by the very brilliant, affectionate, cordial enthusiastic and *unanimous* reception I met with in this the *greatest* metropolis in the *World*. . . I feel *deeply grateful* for this display of affection and unfeigned loyalty and *attachment* from my good people. It is much more than I deserve, and I shall do my utmost to render myself worthy of all this love and affection" . . .*

That was a moment of self-realization. Only the most attenuated tincture of British blood, derived from the Electress Sophia grand-daughter of James I and mother of George I ran in her veins ; one ancestress was Scotch, otherwise she was wholly German. She had been brought up in strict retirement by a German mother who always

* *Girlhood*, 1, p. 235.

felt herself an alien : the friends whom she most leant on were her German Uncle Leopold and her German governess, the male cousins who had been to visit her, whose company she had found so delightful, dear Alexander and Ernest Württemberg, gentle Augustus and handsome Ferdinand, and *i miei carissimi cugini*, Ernest and Albert Coburg were German, and the only Englishman with whom she had been brought into constant contact (and he was Irish) she detested. But she had slipped out of that environment, and knew herself, wherever English interests were concerned, the Queen of England.

The man who had most to do with this realization was her Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne. From the first interview the Queen had with him on the day of her Accession she had put herself into his hands in the conduct of all business relating to the State, but Uncle Leopold who had approved, indeed ordered that, could not have foreseen the personal friendship which so speedily ripened between this elderly man, approaching sixty, and the girl of eighteen. Lord Melbourne had had considerable experience in his life of sunny weather and of stormy, and it had wrought in him a kindly but slightly cynical indifference to weather of every kind, so that he realized that all is vanity, but was aware that some vanities were far more interesting than others. He had great charm, great attraction for women, and his simple and sincere affection for this young girl who almost immediately found in him her third father (Uncle Leopold being *il mio secondo padre*) was shot with a romantic chivalry for the "little Queen" on whom such destinies rested and who gazed at the vast prospect with such blue-eyed, open-mouthed appreciation.

He had thought it "a damned bore" when in 1834 King William had sent for him to form a Ministry : he was not sure whether he would take office or not, but now the most

brilliant company at Holland House which hung on his words and his wit, was less to his mind than the eager chatter of this girl, which she recorded with such gusto in her Journal. He saw her daily over the affairs of her realm, and she listened to his advice with utter confidence in his wisdom, but their intercourse was by no means over when business was finished. They rode together ; he dined with her, whether at Windsor or Buckingham Palace, practically every night, always sitting on her left, and when dinner was done (the gentlemen were not allowed to stay more than ten minutes in the dining-room, after the ladies had withdrawn) and she had had a few words with each of her guests, the Duchess of Kent was settled down at her table of whist, and perhaps the Queen and her Prime Minister and the ladies of the Court played a game. One night they were engaged in that popular pastime of making a word out of the jumbled letters of which it was composed. The Queen was given a collection of letters which quite puzzled her, and no wonder, for it turned out that the word was "thermometer," but Lady Mary had imagined it was spelt "thermomater," and Lord Melbourne said, "It is a very good way to spell it, but not *the* way," and how they laughed ! Or she would consult him about what books she should read on English History, and before the evening was out he had recommended her the *Annual Register* : Adolphus's *History of George III*, Hume's *History of England*, Clarendon's *History of the Rebellion* and his *Memoirs* : farther afield he had a good word for Baranta's *History of the House of Burgundy* and Daru's *History of Venice*, and O'Driscoll's *Ireland* and Scott's *History of Scotland* : those would be enough to begin upon. Sometimes he seems not to have been in a very amiable humour and flatly disagreed with all she said. One evening, for instance, a sprightly volley of snubs took place :

Lord Melbourne: Orloff was exactly like Henry VIII.

The Queen: Henry VIII was not nearly so good-natured.

Lord Melbourne: Oh! he was a very good-natured man: read what Dr. Lingard says. Oh! He was a great man. We owe the Reformation to him.

The Queen: His motives for that were not of the best.

Lord Melbourne: That does not signify. Those women bothered him so.

The Queen: He ill-treated Catharine of Aragon.

Lord Melbourne: His conscience told him to. He considered her not a wife but a concubine.

The Queen: Queen Mary was horribly cruel.

Lord Melbourne: She thought it right to be, etc. etc.

She did not resent all this contradiction: she was learning. And if, as occasionally happened, Lord Melbourne fell asleep in the middle of one of these dialogues, instead of being offended she was only afraid that he was not quite well. Another day she was a few minutes late in returning from her ride, and found that Lord Melbourne who was coming to see her had gone home. She only blamed herself for not being punctual.

Sometimes these conversations resemble nothing so much as the topics introduced to a patient by a psycho-analyst (Lord Melbourne being the patient), and we must figure the Queen as asking him an interminable series of questions, for no one could talk, of his own accord, with such staggering irrelevance. His mind was probed in every direction, Eton Montem, Lord Duncannon's teeth, the over-rated quality of bird-song, the inebriate habits of his servants, the dullness of gardens, the inordinate amount of pastry Lord Melbourne used to eat when a boy, the difficulty of breaking cannibals of their habits because they thought nothing was so good as human flesh, Islay's (her dog) passion for licking his spectacles. Every topic under the sun was discussed, and every day she wrote down all he had said.

Uncle Leopold, though he talked like the best books, had never been recorded at such length, and indeed, as Adviser Supreme, he had already been quietly deposed. He wrote to her, for instance, about a difficult situation that might arise in Portugal and put his view, but instead of getting an enthusiastic assurance that his niece entirely agreed with him, he was only informed that she had spoken to her Ministers, and that "it was impossible to say *beforehand what we shall do in such an emergency.*" He thought English people are sometimes "*sufficiently absurd*" as to be jealous of French conquests" in Africa. She only replied (after the lapse of three weeks) that England was very anxious to be on good terms with France. Again during the first winter of her reign he sent her a most thoughtful discourse on the difficult "trade" of being a good Constitutional Sovereign. Monarchy required "certain elements" and the occupation of the Sovereign must be constantly to *preserve these elements*, and "should they have been too much weakened by untoward circumstances to strengthen them again . . . it is *not* the being *called* Queen or King, which can be of the least *consequence*, when to the title there is not also annexed the power indispensable for the exercise of those functions."

There indeed was the "best book" again, to which in later years Stockmar added some remarkable pages, but the Queen did not answer this letter for more than a month, and then only told him that the House of Commons was in an excellent temper and what a brilliant Levée she had just held. The glory was departing from Leopold, and in consequence from Stockmar, and she no longer relied on them. But how she missed Lord Melbourne that Christmas! He was away on holiday for nine days: never since she came to the Throne had she been without him for so long. Then again those delightful conversations were re-

sumed, and though they saw each other daily, the Queen wrote to him as well, not once only but often two or three times a day. If he happened to be absent from a Council it made her sad, for his very presence gave her security.*

* Letters, I, i, pp 93-106. Girlhood, i, pp. 251-268.



CHAPTER V

A MATTER that was of the very first consequence not to the Queen only, but to the whole of her realm was that of her marriage, for as long as she was childless, the next heir to the throne was her uncle the Duke of Cumberland, who, on the death of William IV, had become King of Hanover. He was much the ablest of his brethren, and the most malignant, and during his residence in England had been the most detested man in the country. The Hanoverian Ogre, as he was aptly called, was a large man of the most repulsive appearance, and his reputation, known or rumoured, was uglier yet. Many years ago a very unpleasant incident occurred in his apartment at St. James's Palace which had never been quite cleared up. He had two valets, Neale and a Corsican named Sellis, and one night, about 2 A.M., Neale heard himself called by his master, who cried out, "I am murdered." He found the Duke badly cut about : further investigation disclosed his other valet, Sellis lying dead with his throat cut. There was a razor covered with blood beside him, and blood-stained water in his washing-basin. An inquest was held : the Duke deposed that Sellis had attacked him as he lay asleep with intent to kill him. That was all he knew about it, and it must therefore be presumed that Sellis went back to his room, washed his hands of the Royal blood and then shed his own. The jury accepted this strange story, and returned a verdict of suicide. But public opinion was not so well satisfied, and it was generally

believed and more than whispered that the Duke, under the threat of blackmail or for fear of Sellis making some extremely discreditable disclosure about him, had murdered him, getting wounded in the struggle. Twenty years later the public was reminded again of razors in connection with this sinister person, though there was no suspicion on that occasion that he had used one. He had an intrigue with a certain Lady Graves which came to the knowledge of her husband. Lord Graves thereupon committed suicide in the same manner as Sellis was supposed to have done. The old scandal stirred again, and in a public print called "The Satirist," a cartoon showed the Duke smothering the occupant of a bed on the hangings of which was a Royal Crown above "V": in another lampoon in dramatic form, the Duke spoke of "a brother's brat between me and the Crown," and (with a fiendish laugh) of the usefulness of a razor.*

Such was the reputation, deserved or not, of the man who in 1838 still stood next the throne. By his wife Princess Frederica Caroline of Mecklenburg-Strelitz he had one son George, born in the same year as the Queen. As a child his eyesight was very defective, and an accident rendered him absolutely blind.† It was therefore highly important that the Queen should marry and have offspring, for otherwise the Ogre would inevitably succeed to the throne and after him his blind son.

Both the Queen and Prince Albert had long known the future that the Coburg family, and, in particular, Uncle Leopold had ordained for them, and after Albert's visit in the spring of 1836, she had written to her Uncle warmly accepting it. But, after that, the contract, so to speak, had

* Fulford, *Royal Dukes*, pp. 206-209. Jerrold, *Early Court of Queen Victoria*, pp. 16, 17. Greville, Feb. 10, 1830.

† Fulford, *op. cit.*, pp. 206-209. Jerrold, *op. cit.*, pp. 16, 17. Greville, Feb. 10, 1830.

been filed and put away, for during the next two years there was no suggestion of their meeting again, and in her Journal and letters there is only the barest mention of Albert : she wrote to him once in answer to the congratulations she received on her accession from "your Majesty's most obedient and faithful servant, Albert," and she remembered that August 26 was her "*dearest* cousin's birthday." * He, on his side, absorbed in his studies, seems to have thought as little or less about her. But in this winter of 1837-1838 the Queen showed signs of an uneasy curiosity about Albert — had she been a little rash in her rapturous acceptance of her fate ? — and she wrote to Uncle Leopold, asking for news of him. The temper of her letter (unfortunately not available) can be guessed from his reply, and Uncle Leopold was clearly disconcerted by it. "You were somewhat irritable when you wrote to me," he replied, and went on to answer her remarks and questions as to what was happening to Albert. He was to stay with Uncle Mensdorff for three months, which would give him time to learn "some *manly accomplishments*." She had been afraid that at Prague he might acquire political views, which, apparently, would be unsuitable for the husband of the Queen of England. He reassured her about that : Albert was clever, "and it is not at the eleventh hour that anybody in three months will make him imbibe political principles." † This mention of the "eleventh hour" is a sufficient indication that it was Uncle Leopold's wish that the marriage, which he regarded as quite settled, should soon take place.

But he was not quite the Sir Oracle that he had been, and she asked her English friend his views about marriage in general, and why marriages were so often broken off. Lord Melbourne's answer must have caused her to ponder.

* Early Years, p. 148. Girlhood, i, p. 222.

† Letters, I, 1, p. 97.

"Why, you see," he said, "a gentleman hardly knows a girl till he has proposed, and then when he has an unrestrained intercourse with her, he sees something and says, 'This I don't quite like' . . . " * Three months went by, and, still inwardly perturbed, she again wrote to Uncle Leopold about Albert's education: she thought travelling enlarged the mind. He agreed, and recommended her to make Stockholm her "commissary-general: it will give *unité d'action et de l'ensemble*." At present Albert and his brother were keeping their University terms at Bonn. She could rely on one thing; "it is my *great* anxiety to see Albert a *very good* and *distinguished young man*, and no pains will be thought too much on my part if this end can be attained." †

Then once more Albert completely fades out of the picture. Neither of the two young people showed the slightest wish to see each other, they did not write to each other, and for more than another year the Queen did not mention his name in her numerous letters to her Uncle. Albert was fully occupied with his education, and perhaps she was glad of that, for that would gain time, and evidently she was beginning, as the sequel proved, to doubt whether the pleasant impression he had made on her two years before was of a quality that would sustain the weight of matrimony. They knew little of each other, and, remembering Lord Melbourne's rather disconcerting remark, she must have wondered what Albert thought of her. Did he regard her, even with the dazzling prospect she would bring him, as a mate whom he personally desired? Supposing . . . But life was joyously full, and, leaving the Cumberland bogey still unlaidd, she went about the pressing businesses and pleasures of life with unabated appetite. There were anxious times that spring for the Government, and now

* *Girlhood*, i, pp. 256-257.

† *Letters*, I, 1, p. 111.

and then she was in despair at the thought of their possible fall, for that would mean that Lord Melbourne's constant companionship must end. But why anticipate that? Life was most enjoyable: she had her singing lessons from Lablache, there were daily rides: one day the riding-party covered twenty-two miles, and she was hardly back when Lord Melbourne came for his talk, and she told him twice over exactly where they had been. She took him in hand, and spoke to him like a mother: *diet* was what he wanted and he would do well not to mix his drinks. There were many dinner-parties, she gave a great ball at Buckingham Palace consisting of alternate quadrilles and vales. The Queen, with a due regard for her exalted station, decided that it would not "do" for her to be encircled by the arm of a subject, so she sat out the vales with her mother and her aunts, but danced every quadrille, and did not get to bed till after sunrise. Lord Melbourne, alas, could not be present, for he had neglected her advice about diet and drinks and was far from well. The Irish Tithe Bill caused anxiety, but the Government had a majority of nineteen, which was larger than was expected. On May 24 came her birthday, and it felt "very old" to be nineteen. But another ball relieved the weight of years, and Lord Melbourne was better, and came to it. Though valsing, he had agreed, was undesirable, she took part in an old English country dance, which lasted for a whole hour (pity the Band!) and she got to bed at five.*

Meantime Uncle Leopold at Laeken was prey to considerable misgivings about the Queen's feelings towards him both personally as his beloved niece and in their Brother-and-Sister relation as Sovereigns, and he did not rightly discriminate between the niece and the Sister who had so notably clear a perception of what it meant to be Queen of

* *Girlhood*, i, pp. 298-332

England. There was some cause for his anxiety about the latter relationship. Less than a year ago he, who had reduced Sovereignty to a science, had figured himself as being her unquestioned director, giving her explicit instructions on some points, and, on others, saying he was still undecided. In fact Uncle Leopold had been recalling those days, twenty-two years ago, when he had married the heiress to the English crown, and he had thought they were returning : he had been dreaming dominantly, like Joseph, and though he had no apprehensions that his Sister, like Joseph's brethren, would put him into a pit, it did not look as if his dreams were to find fulfilment. He had to change his tone, and now instead of dictating her policy in English affairs, he must be suppliant to her about the French menace to Belgium. He wrote : "All I want from your kind Majesty is, that you will occasionally express to your Ministers, and particularly to good Lord Melbourne, that, as far as it is *compatible* with the interests of *your own* dominions, you do *not* wish that your Government should take the *lead* in such measures as might in a short time bring on the *destruction* of this country, as well as that of your uncle and his family." *

This was a strange transformation : the dictatorial Uncle had become a very humble nephew, and Aunt Victoria assured him of her beneficent regard. But she reproached him too : he had hinted that her personal affection for him was waning, and that hurt her : she told him it was very wrong of him to imagine such a thing for it was quite untrue. But he certainly had been trying to use her personal feeling for him as a means of securing political benefits, and her shrewd mind quite clearly perceived that. She talked over his letter with Lord Melbourne and they agreed that it was "rather hard of Uncle appealing to my feelings

* Letters, I, i, p. 116.

of affection for him,"* and she pointed out to Uncle Leopold the distinction between international politics and the affection of his niece with tact and clarity.

Between balls and political crises and rides, and the eager discharge of her duties, and preparations for the Coronation in June, this spring was a full time. When Uncle Leopold had been at Windsor last summer, the Queen had hoped that he and Aunt Louise would come to it, but representations had been made that Kings and Queens (though uncles and aunts) were not wanted, and he took the hint.

There was a private rehearsal for the Queen in the Abbey on the day before the ceremony, which was fortunate, for the two thrones on which she would sit before and after the Crowning were too low, and had to be raised. On the morning of June 28, she was awakened at four o'clock by the roar of the guns in the Park. There was a tremendous welcome for her as she drove to the Abbey in the State coach : she was ineffably proud "to be the Queen of *such* a Nation," and hoped that none of her people would be "crushed or squeezed." With an amazing minuteness she described in her Journal † every movement in the pageant : the changes of her robes, the placing of the Crown on her head and the simultaneous assumption of their coronets by all the peers and peeresses, the Enthronization, the Homage, the various unforeseen effects like Lord Rolle (as if playing a charade on his own name) rolling down the steps to the throne, how she was given the Orb before the right moment, how the Archbishop insisted on putting the ruby ring on her wrong finger — the clergy would have been the better for more rehearsals — and it hurt terribly to get it off again, and how *loaded* she felt with the Crown on her head and the Orb in her left hand and the Sceptre

* *Girlhood*, 1, p. 345

† *Ibid*, 1, pp. 357-364

in her right ! But what most went to her intimate heart was the "fatherly" look Lord Melbourne gave her when she was crowned, and the smile she exchanged with her dear Lehzen. Nimble indeed had Lehzen and Späth been on that day : they had seen her leave Buckingham Palace and arrive at the Abbey : they had seen her leave the Abbey and were back at Buckingham Palace to see her return. It was eight hours since she had left at ten that morning, but she was not feeling tired, and Lord Melbourne dined. "And you did it so well : excellent !" said he, with the tears in his eyes. After dinner they had their usual talk : he had had breakfast in the Jerusalem Chamber before the ceremony : whenever "clergy or a Dean and Chapter had anything to do with anything, there's sure to be plenty to eat." And she stayed up till midnight looking at the fireworks and illuminations in the Green Park. Not till forty-nine years later did she again go to the Abbey as the central figure of a great pageant, and that was to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of her accession. There was no State coach then, nor Royal robes nor Orb nor Crown nor Sceptre, and once more she was alone in her long widowhood, as she had been to-day in her girlhood, and a little old lady in a black satin dress, with a cavalcade of Princes, sons and sons-in-law and grandsons, for escort on the drive, came up the nave, leaning on her stick, to give thanks to God for His loving mercies to her. She was tired then, but once more after dinner she admired the illuminations.

CHAPTER VI

THE King of the Belgians and Queen Louise, not having come to the Coronation, paid the Queen a visit in September at Windsor. It must have been painfully clear to him how completely Lord Melbourne had supplanted him as adviser in all things pertaining to the State and how he had encroached on her affection. She began to look on Uncle Leopold for the first time with critical instead of adoring eyes, and the Journal exhibits a very distinct touch of frost. She went out riding one day with the two, but Uncle left them, and her horse, missing his usual companion, shied and threw her. She did not explicitly blame Uncle, but that was why it happened. She was not hurt, but as she sat between them at dinner that night, "Uncle talked much and praised me for my *feat* of falling!" But Lord Melbourne twice asked her "most kindly and anxiously: 'Are you *really* not the worse?'" He wanted to be reassured that she had not been hurt, whereas Uncle Leopold spoke of her fall as a feat, a circus trick, rather amusing. No more need be said. Next night, Sir George Villiers, British Minister at Madrid, came to dine and afterwards she and Melbourne were looking at an album together. There were some Spanish drawings in it, and Sir George and Uncle talked for a long time about Spain "and Lord Melbourne and I listened, and occasionally joined in." Then Uncle began to give advice on Imperial affairs, for he had not quite grasped that in his niece's estimation he no longer existed at all as Controller, through

her, of the destinies of England, and the resemblance between his conversation and a highly instructive book, was not as close as it had been. He said that the Boundary Question in Canada would give trouble, and Lord Melbourne replied that it was doing so already. Uncle thought that England ought to keep 10,000 troops in Canada. A very good thing, said Lord Melbourne, but perhaps the country could not manage it. "Such an Empire as this," said Uncle, "must go on : it can't stand still : else it goes back." This was rather coldly received ; so also was the suggestion that the Life Guards and Household troops ought to be doubled.* In fact there was no enthusiasm over Uncle, and no mention at all in the Journal of when this rather frigid visit came to an end ; no tearful days succeeded nor laments for the cruel fate that allowed the Queen to see so little of those she loved best. She wrote no heart-broken letter to him, as she had done a year ago, how she missed him "*every, everywhere,* and his conversation and his *protection* out riding," for his conduct out riding had been the reverse of protective. She sent him some odd presents, a steam-engine and a box of gardening tools with his initials on the handle, and his sister sent him a Highland costume, but the Queen's letter which accompanied these gifts was addressed not to him but his wife.† Without doubt Uncle Leopold had lost ground with his niece, but he hoped to make good this loss, for Albert's terms at the University of Bonn were over, and Baron Stockmar was going to act as tutor-cicerone to him in Italy. Stockmar was Leopold's second self as regards Albert and Albert's future and the forming of his nature, and thus Leopold hoped to get back on the swings what he had lost on the roundabouts.

* *Girlhood*, ii, pp. 11-25.

† *Letters*, 1st Series, 1, p. 129.

But he had not sufficiently allowed for the change that had taken place in his niece since Albert's visit in 1836, when she had accepted Uncle Leopold's choice for her with such warmth of welcome. In those lonely and restricted years at Kensington Palace all those Coburg cousins had seemed to her tall and handsome and talented and delightful, but now she was Queen of England, revelling in her dignities and powers, and that made a difference to her valuations. The thought of her marriage was a burden on her mind, and once more in the spring of 1839 she introduced it into her conversation with Lord Melbourne. He confirmed her belief that King William had always wanted her to marry Prince Alexander of Orange, but that was all past and done with, and still the problem remained as to what she intended to do. She asked him if people were talking about her marriage much, and he answered rather guardedly that if they were not doing so now they soon would. She told him that the best way to stop people talking was that she should not marry at all : in any case she would not do so for some time yet.* The thought of Albert, or indeed anybody, as a husband was certainly distasteful.

As a matter of fact her marriage was being discussed a good deal. It was known that Albert was a candidate, and that he was King Leopold's candidate was not a point in his favour. The King's meddling with English affairs, his visits, his influence, his retention of Claremont with £10,000 a year, his own marriage with a daughter of Louis Philippe were all highly unpopular, and the *Times* probably reflected a large body of public opinion in an article which had appeared in December, 1838 : "There is no foreigner who sets foot in England less welcome to the people generally or looked at with more distrust and alienation than

* *Girlhood*, II, pp 126, 127.

Leopold Brummagen King of Belgium, who is nothing better than a provisional prefect of France on whose ruler his marriage has made him doubly dependent." Nor was public feeling more favourable to the young man himself, "he was of an untoward disposition . . . he was intellectually and morally unfit." His family were opportunists in religion, Protestant or Papist as it suited their ambitions.* Much of this disagreeable stuff was certainly known to the Queen and her Prime Minister, and her conversations with him became far less exuberant and light-hearted.

She was dissatisfied with herself, and laid a hundred pessimistic reflections before her friend. She felt nervous when she had to speak : she emphasized words wrongly when she was reading : she said childish and stupid things in conversation. We see signs of that hypochondria which was so distressing in her middle years. She thought she was sickening for influenza one day ; she thought Windsor disagreed with her another : all her wish for food failed as soon as she had tasted her dinner, unlike Louis XIV to whom eating gave appetite. She plied Lord Melbourne with questions as to what other people said of her : did they think she made mistakes : was she cold and stern in manner : was it not right not to mind unpopularity ? She was sure she could never bear up against difficulties : she was angry with Lord Melbourne for calling her beloved Islay "a dull dog," and he was so silent after dinner ; what could have vexed him ? Then yet again the question of her marriage came up, and now for the first time Albert's name was mentioned between them : hitherto they had only discussed her marriage in the abstract. Lord Melbourne did not like it. "Cousins," he said, "are not very good things, and those Coburgs are not popular abroad : the Russians hate them." Instantly she whisked round, "By all that I heard," she said,

* Jerrold, *Early Court of Queen Victoria*, pp. 231-233.

"Albert would be just the person. . ." Besides who else was there ? She thought it was quite out of the question that she should marry a subject. Though the Hanoverian Ogre was still Heir Apparent, she could not see why she should marry for three or four years yet. . . "I said I dreaded the thought of marrying : that I was so accustomed to have my own way that I thought it was 10 to 1 that I shouldn't agree with anybody. . ." *

All these conversations betokened a disquieted mind. She was just at the age when adolescence makes private hells of its own, and she had no girl friend nor an older woman in whom she could confide. She had quite determined to have no intimacy with the Ladies of her Household, Lehzen the middle-aged spinster would be of no use in such a difficulty and the woman to whom a girl naturally goes in these perplexities common to her age, her mother, was the very last person to whom she would dream of taking her troubles. An unhappy spring.

While the Queen was in this querulous state a very disturbing and scandalous affair occurred, to which there is not the faintest allusion in her Journals or Letters, for, later, she destroyed many of her records of these years between her accession and her marriage, finding them "not pleasing and rather painful to herself." If some of these concerned this affair their painfulness is not to be wondered at.

The scandal started in the month of March 1839, with the return of Lady Flora Hastings from a holiday in Scotland to her duties as lady-in-waiting to the Duchess of Kent. The two were devoted friends, and in those regrettable dissensions between the Queen and her mother, Lady Flora was in the opposite camp to Lehzen. Lady Flora was unwell, and consulted Sir James Clark, Court Physician both to the Queen and the Duchess of Kent. He noticed

* *Girlhood*, II, pp. 153, 154.

an unusual fullness in her figure, and it occurred to him that she might be going to have a child. Instead of telling her or holding his tongue altogether, he committed the monstrous professional indiscretion of telling Lady Portman, one of the Queen's ladies. How precisely the scandal spread cannot be known. Lady Tavistock, Lord Melbourne and the Queen heard of it, and, in the other camp, the Duchess of Kent. The Queen decided (whether on the advice of others or on her own judgment), that the matter must be cleared up by a medical examination of Lady Flora by Sir James Clark and another doctor jointly. Lady Flora agreed, and chose as the second doctor, Sir Charles Clarke. The latter, having asked Lady Flora some questions about her symptoms was perfectly satisfied that there was no truth in the allegation against her, but Sir James insisted on a more searching examination which he conducted with unnecessary roughness, but was satisfied also. The result was communicated to the Queen and she made a very great mistake. The only proper thing to do was instantly to dismiss Sir James Clark from his appointment to her : he had made a wrong diagnosis, and by his monstrous indiscretion had started a scandal which had now spread through clubs and the press, and which, quite properly, the Hastings' family violently resented. Instead, the Queen thought that a private apology to Lady Flora was sufficient. It was grossly insufficient, and personal bias entered into her decision. To suppose the impossible for a moment, if her elderly beloved Lehzen, no more irreproachable than Lady Flora had been proved to be, had been the victim, she would have dismissed Sir James without a moment's hesitation.

So much seems to be fairly certain about the actual happenings in this deplorable affair : about others the data are contradictory. Lady Flora, for instance, writing to her sister, said that "the horrible conspiracy" was undoubtedly got

up by Lehzen and was directed against the Duchess of Kent and her party, Sir John Conroy being hinted at as the cause of her own disproved pregnancy. Her father on the other hand, in a long letter he subsequently wrote to the *Morning Post* entirely exculpated Lehzen of having any hand in it. In July came the tragical end. Lady Flora died, and a post-mortem established that the alteration in her figure which had given rise to the whole wretched business, was due to an incurable complaint of the liver.

From the time when, early in March, the scandal began to spread, indignation at the treatment of Lady Flora had been growing in intensity. The Queen recorded with a sort of unrepentant defiance that the people in the street cheered her ; when she went to service on Sunday at the Chapel Royal the crowds called out "The Queen for ever," "God bless your Majesty," "Bravo,"* but she knew that among the aristocracy and upper classes her popularity had suffered heavily : the chivalrous welcome with which her accession had been hailed died down at the sad want of chivalry which she had shewn to one of her own sex.

Not less strong was the feeling against her Government : she was very young, she trusted implicitly in Lord Melbourne to direct her goings, and no doubt she would have taken his advice if he had insisted that she must behave more worthily. He himself felt that the affair had been disastrous for the stability of the Government, and certainly it hastened the political crisis which the Queen had so long dreaded. On May 7 the Government secured only a majority of five on the Jamaica Constitution Bill, and their resignation was imminent. She was dreadfully affected, and Lord Melbourne hardly less so at the sad interviews that followed, when she begged him "not to forsake her," but there was no help for it, and on his advice she sent for the

* Girlhood, II, p. 177

Duke of Wellington. She told him frankly with what reluctance she had parted with her late Ministry, and asked him to form her new Government. He refused : he was old, he said, and he was deaf, and he had no power whatever in the House of Commons ; she had better send for Sir Robert Peel. She disliked him, and, as she told Melbourne, she regarded him and the Tories generally as "Enemies," (more especially so just now owing to the strong feeling about Lady Flora Hastings) and it was in this spirit she sent for him : she intended to fight him. Last year reviewing her troops, she recorded in her Journal that she could easily imagine herself to be a man leading her troops to battle, but for this encounter it was far better to be a girl, and she armed herself with the appropriate weapons of her sex. Never could a young King, however firm of purpose, have scored such a triumph as she in the struggle that ensued. Had he burst into tears when he learned that he would lose those prized and intimate talks with his Prime Minister and called himself forsaken and lonely, he would only have been told not to be a cry-baby and behave in so unkingly a manner. But a girl of twenty in tears roused feelings not of contempt but of sympathetic chivalry.

She chose her weapon for this single-handed encounter very wisely. Lord Melbourne, little guessing what use she might make of this suggestion, had said that she might quite properly ask that none of her Household, except those who were engaged in politics, should be changed, and out of that she swiftly forged her sword. Peel came in answer to her summons (such a cold odd man) and she formed the welcome impression that he was "*not happy* or sanguine," as indeed he had little reason to be, and she just let the light run down the blade of her sword, saying that she wished to retain all the Ladies of her Household. Natu-

rally Peel demurred to this, for her Ladies had been chosen for her by Melbourne, and were the wives and daughters of Whigs, and he begged her to shew some slight mark of confidence in the new Government she had asked him to form by making some changes. He then went away to busy himself with the formation of his Cabinet, and returned next day to say that his colleagues felt that if she retained all her Ladies she had no confidence in them and "agreed unanimously that they could not go on." Not a sign of yielding : she said she would think about it but felt sure she would not change her mind ; and she scribbled bitterly sarcastic and illogical reflections in her Journal : "This was *quite* wonderful ! The Ladies his only support !! What an admission of weakness !"

She saw her advantage : the man was frightened. "I never saw a man so frightened," she gleefully wrote to Lord Melbourne whom she kept informed at prodigious length of all that was going on, and her succeeding interviews with the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel did not reassure them. The iron vein in her nature was never more in evidence, and there she sat with her blue eyes disconcertingly direct and unwinking, her mouth tightly compressed in the intervals of repeating her refusals over and over again. She would not give up a single one of her Ladies. Lady Normanby, for instance, Mistress of the Robes, was the wife of a Whig Minister, but she never talked politics to any of her Ladies, so that didn't matter. In vain the Duke urged that her Ladies corresponded to a King's Lords in Waiting, but that, she told him, was not the case. She politely added that she was sorry if she was embarrassing her Government.

At this point Lord Melbourne took a hand in the *mêlée*. Hitherto he had advised the Queen to put her point about her Household strongly, as a personal matter, but that if

Sir Robert Peel insisted, not to stand out. But for once his counsel was rejected, and there was a complete *impasse* : she would not yield an inch, and Peel had said he could not form a Ministry unless she did. So Melbourne summoned his late Cabinet, and laid the situation before them. After long discussion they advised the Queen to write to Peel, saying, "The Queen, having considered the proposals made to her yesterday by Sir Robert Peel to remove the Ladies of her Bed Chamber, cannot consent to adopt a course which she conceives to be contrary to usage, and repugnant to her feelings." Whether the Cabinet had a right to advise her is one of the questions which might be unprofitably argued till Doomsday, for though they had not been replaced by a Tory Cabinet (Peel's being still in process of formation) the Queen had entrusted him with that task, and it could be maintained therefore that he was *ipso facto* her Prime Minister and that she was taking the advice of the opposition. But no such scruple entered her head for a moment : she copied out this ultimatum before she went to bed : and sent it to Peel early next morning.

She was on tenterhooks as to what his reply would be and a volley of notes was despatched to Lord Melbourne : perhaps he wouldn't reply, since his decision that he could not form a Ministry unless she yielded made his resignation automatic ; and she maintained that she had been fully prepared to give "these people" a fair trial. To show how truly unprejudiced she was, she wrote that she "must rejoice at getting out of the hands of people who would have sacrificed every personal feeling and instinct of the Queen's to their bad party purposes." Peel's answer arrived in the course of the morning : he reiterated that without this proof of the Queen's confidence he could not undertake to form a Ministry, and so when a little later Lord Melbourne came to see her there was joyful news. She gave a ball that night

for the Grand-Duke Alexander, (subsequently Tsar Alexander II) and danced gleefully till 3.15 A.M. Next day came Lord Melbourne with a Cabinet Minute to read to her; since Peel had resigned they were prepared to take office again.*

So ended the Bedchamber Plot : the action had lasted just four days, and it had been directed and fought and won by the unbending will of this girl not yet twenty. Lord Melbourne had been opposed to her fighting, had counselled her not to be obdurate about the change in her Household if Peel insisted, but she scorned such craven policy. Certainly she did not want to lose her ladies, but that was perhaps more a pretext for war than a stand for a principle ; behind it in any case was the passionate desire not to lose her Melbourne. He came to dine on Sunday and what a conversation there was ! They talked of the horrid way they buried people at Venice, of Priests and Troubadours, of French cookery (cookery was the noblest art in the world) of Confectionery and Kandahar and calligraphy : Lord Melbourne could not read what he had written himself, so nobody else could. He was in the highest spirits, "talking to himself and pulling his hair about which always makes him look much handsomer." Then off she went to Windsor and there was another ball for the Grand Duke Alexander, but, alas, a farewell to him also. He was a dear amiable young man, and, "talking jokingly," she thought she was really a little in love with him.†

She was twenty now, and the question of her marriage again occupied her, and she was as undecided as ever. Uncle Leopold wrote to her in June, proposing that Albert and Ernest should pay her a visit : at first she wished them to come, but next month she changed her mind again.

* *Girlhood*, ii, pp 161-177. Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 155-173.

† *Ibid.*, ii, pp. 180-191.

Uncle Ferdinand with his three children were coming in August, and they would be succeeded by Uncle Leopold and Aunt Louise, so, wanting to put Albert's visit off, she guilefully asked Lord Melbourne if he did not think that this third invasion would make altogether too many Coburgs. Unfortunately he didn't, and again she raised objection after objection : Albert was younger than she was (three months) : she did not want to marry (if at all) for a year or two yet, and that being so it was not fair to keep him waiting. She asked Melbourne point-blank if he liked the match, and at last he said, "I don't like it very much." * What was his reason he did not tell her : he may not have liked the first-cousinship : he may have thought there was enough Coburg blood already. But something must be settled and in answer to Uncle Leopold on this "odious" subject, she sent him a sort of ultimatum. "Even if I should like Albert," she wrote, "I can make *no final promise this year*, for at the *very earliest* any such event could not take place till *two or three years hence*. For independent of my youth and my *great* repugnance to change my present position, there is *no anxiety* evinced in *this country* for such an event." And, if she found that she liked him "as a friend, and as a *cousin* and as a *brother* but not more," she intended to refuse him without being guilty of any breach of promise since she had never given any.†

The malady of her age grew more acute : it was strange that the Queen of England, aged twenty, could not be happy. The ebullience of her victory over Peel had faded out ; Lady Flora Hastings died at Buckingham Palace, and once more the public indignation over this tragic affair boiled up. She sent a carriage to follow the funeral procession to the station, and police had to guard it from being

* *Girlhood*, II, pp. 215-225.

† *Letters*, 1st Series, I, pp. 177, 178.

wrecked. And Uncle Leopold was trying to manage her movements for her in his meddlesome manner. His father-in-law, King Louis Philippe, and the Queen of France, were at Eu, and they would like to come to see her at the Pavilion at Brighton. They would come by sea, spend the day with her and dine, and then re-embark. She referred the project to Melbourne, but it would not do. Such a visit would be taken to mean a closer friendship between England and France, and Europe would not like that.* But the interfering Uncle was persistent: it would be "*very desirable*" he thought, and surely she could manage it. She could not: she was exhausted, she was not up to it, and so there was the end of that. She was worried and out of tune: even Lord Melbourne did not escape her censures. He had promised to come to dinner and didn't: he was scolded for not having told her that Lord Normanby and Lord John Russell were to exchange offices in the Cabinet: it vexed her not to "hear what is settled and done in her own name": her Speech for the Prorogation of Parliament had been written on thin, slippery paper, and her nervous shaking hands could hardly hold it. Then it was odious to find that everything she said was repeated by silly people to make mischief: and she would not ask the Duke of Wellington to stay at Windsor for Uncle Leopold's approaching visit: and never would she have any dealings with Tories again. She hated them all.

Uncle Ferdinand and his children came and went, and Uncle Leopold and Aunt Louise arrived. But there was no pleasure in the once-beloved Uncle's visit, for the Queen regarded him as the main contriver of the situation which was causing her so much disquiet and indecision. The weather was dreadful, she got "quite muzzed" with reading despatches, and Aunt Adelaide was soon coming to spend

* *Girlhood*, ii, pp 232, 233

two nights at Windsor, and that would be a "severe trial." All enjoyment and exhilaration had faded out of life, and at the bottom of it all was her nervousness at the visit of Ernest and Albert, now drawing so near.

The cousins were to have arrived on September 30, 1839, but there was a Council at Windsor that day, and the Queen once more put them off till her Ministers had gone : other-wise people might think that they were here in order "*to settle matters*" and that would not do at all ; so Uncle Leopold was enjoined to keep the cousins in Brussels for a few days more. But when Albert wrote to her to make a further postponement she was far from pleased, for the nightmare thought occurred to her that Albert was as reluctant as she : "the *retard* of these young people," she wrote to Uncle, "puts me rather out . . . I don't think they exhibit much *empressement* to come here which rather shocks me." * Three letters in a week from Uncle Leopold, and two parcels of delicious ortolans smoothed these ruffled feathers, and on October 10 the Queen sent carriages to meet the cousins on their landing at the Tower of London.

An odd thing had happened that morning at Windsor : stones had been thrown from outside and broken the two windows of the Queen's dressing-room and three other windows near by : rather ominous. More ominous yet would the Queen and Albert have thought it had each known what was in the mind of the other as the two brothers made the journey to Windsor. The Queen recorded this in a remarkable memorandum which she made after the Prince's death. She wrote : "Nor can the Queen now think without indignation against herself, of her wish to keep the Prince waiting for probably three or four years, at the risk of ruining all his prospects for life, until she might feel in-

* Letters, I, i, p. 186.

clined to marry ! And the Prince has since told her that he came over in 1839 with the intention of telling her that if she could not then make up her mind, she must understand that he could not now wait for a decision, as he had done when this marriage was first talked about. The only excuse the Queen can make for herself is in the fact that the sudden change from the secluded life at Kensington to the independence of her position as Queen Regnant, at the age of eighteen, put all ideas of marriage out of her mind, which she now most bitterly repents." *

Happily these unloverlike thoughts never found expression, and the cousins arrived at Windsor after a frightful crossing from Antwerp. The Queen thought them "grown and changed and embellished," and Albert, she saw with emotion, was "*beautiful*." It was an immense compliment to be told by her Ladies that he was like her, and Lord Melbourne when appealed to said he saw the resemblance at once. And he danced so well (it was permissible for her to valse and galop with him), and for three days they rode together and looked at drawings and played games of Tactics and Fox and Geese, and proximity did its perfect work. Besides, as she told Lord Melbourne, he was so amiable and good-natured, whereas her own temper was so bad, and she revoked the opinion she had expressed to him before that a man's looks did not matter, and owned that beauty was an advantage. Next day her mind was made up, and she told Melbourne she would marry him in a year's time. But he read her intention better than that, and when he suggested that the wedding should be celebrated much sooner, she agreed, and the two, taking Albert's consent for granted, instantly went into Committee, as to what should be "done" for him. He must be made a Field Marshal, she thought, and a Royal Highness but not a Peer : Parliament

* Grey, Early Years of the Prince Consort, p. 220.

would see about provision for him. She would have to propose to him herself, for, as she told Aunt Gloucester afterwards, Albert "would never have presumed to take such a liberty as to propose to the Queen of England."

Next day she sent for him and told him "it would make me *too happy* if he would consent to what I wished," and they were betrothed. She said she was quite unworthy of him, she felt it was a great sacrifice on his part, and the date was to be early in February. . . Then the chief contriver, Uncle Leopold, must be informed. Albert was *perfection*, she wrote ; she loved him more than she could say : she was bewildered by her happiness.* Then came the turn of the Royal Family of England, and the Queen sent them all formal notification of her intentions. There had been suggestions that she might marry her cousin Prince George of Cambridge, but he, she told Melbourne, "was evidently happy to be *clear* of me," and his father insisted that the idea of such a match had never entered his head. "But that," said the Queen, "I do not believe." †

And what of the chosen bridegroom ? His letters to his relatives and friends were those of a man whose emotions were absolutely untouched by the decision that had given his future bride such rapture, but who met the situation with pluck, clearly realizing the opportunities it would afford him of doing good. "Life has its thorns," he wrote to his stepmother, "in every position, and the consciousness of having used one's powers and endeavours for an object so great as that of promoting the good of so many, will surely be sufficient to support me." ‡ To his friend and tutor Stockmar he wrote : "The event has come upon us by surprise, sooner than we expected. . . I will not let my courage fail. With firm resolution and true zeal on my part, I cannot fail

* Girlhood, ii, pp. 262-269. Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 185-192.

† Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 194-208.

‡ Early Years, p. 238.

to continue noble, manly and princely in all things.”* To his grandmother, the Dowager Duchess of Coburg: “The Queen sent for me alone to her room a few days ago, and declared to me in a genuine outburst of love and affection that I had gained her whole heart, and would make her intensely happy if I would make the sacrifice of sharing her life with her . . . the only thing which troubled her was that she did not think she was worthy of me. . . She is really most good and amiable, and I am quite sure heaven has not given me into evil hands, and that we shall be happy together.

“Since that moment Victoria does whatever she fancies I should wish or like, and we talk together about our future life, which she promises to make as happy as possible. Oh, the future! does it not bring with it the moment when I shall have to take leave of my dear, dear home, and of you! I cannot think of that without deep melancholy taking possession of me.

“The period of our marriage is already close at hand. The Queen and her Ministers wish that it should take place in the first days of February, in which I acquiesced after learning their reasons for it.”†

These are strange letters for a newly-accepted (or rather requested) bridegroom to write. He seems to cleave to his grandmother rather than to his future wife, and to comfort himself with the assurance that he has not fallen into evil hands. The sentimentality which just now engulfed young Germany, thanks to Goethe and Klopstock, made it only a matter of formula that he should write himself broken of heart at leaving his native land and assure his grandmother that he would ever remain “ein treuer Deutscher,” but to tell her that he was about to sacrifice himself for the benefit

* Early Years, p. 232.

† *Ibid.*, pp 239, 240.

of his new country, was an unusual avowal : never did a bridegroom rejoice less at the thought of running his course. When travelling in Italy with Stockmar he had attended all the Carnival balls in Rome, but instead of dancing with Roman beauties he had preferred sitting out with Professors, and now he was giving up the quiet studious life he loved to marry a girl who, he must have known, could never supply him with intellectual stimulus. There would be late hours, which he hated, night after night ; there would be countless guests to whom he must converse, not on art and metaphysics, but with gabble of gossip ; he would be a stranger in an alien land among those whom he privately regarded as barbarians, and whose food made him bilious. We cannot doubt that his avowed purpose of "promoting the good of many," a noble ambition, was the determining factor in his consent. Moreover this marriage had always been presented to him as his destiny, and he looked upon it as *Kismet*. As for Victoria, we must suppose that she was so much in love with him that she did not see or did not care that quiet affection rather than responsive rapture was all he could give her. Indeed the usual rôles of bride and bridegroom were reversed, she was the passionate wooer of her consenting mate.

The cousins stopped at Windsor for a month, and then returned to the beloved Coburg which Albert must so soon leave for ever, while the Queen plunged into all the official preliminaries to the marriage which was now fixed for February 10, 1840. There was plenty to occupy her and abundant opportunity for the vein of iron. It was merely impertinent, she told Melbourne, to seek precedents for the honours that must be bestowed on Albert in those accorded to Queen Anne's husband, that stupid, insignificant futile Prince George of Denmark, who always replied "*Est-ce que possible ?*" to whatever was said to him. Uncle Leopold,

for instance, wanted Albert to be made a Peer, because Prince George was created Duke of Kendal. Apart from the fact that Uncle was quite wrong about that (Prince George having been made Duke of Cumberland), what had he got to do with it? The only thing that mattered was that neither Albert nor she wanted him to be made a Peer at all, for however careful he might be, he would be accused of instilling political bias into his wife. Uncle, in fact, wanted to be in control, and the Queen wrote to Albert with some acidity that "dear Uncle is given to believe that he must rule the roast everywhere. However, that is not a necessity."* So Uncle was put in his place, and it was settled that Albert should not be made a Peer. Then there was the question of his precedence: at first the Queen much desired that he should be created King Consort, but, failing that, that he should take rank next to herself, and before all Royal Dukes, and, in anticipation, before any of his children. Fierce raged the tempest: the Dukes of Sussex and Cambridge were agreeable, but the King of Hanover refused to rank below a "paper Royal Highness." Again Melbourne held that when an Heir-Apparent to the throne was born, Albert could not possibly take precedence of him, and the Queen retorted that Albert's son could never go in front of his father. That seemed an *impasse*, but it was eventually settled that the Sovereign Will could grant him any precedence it wished.†

Then the Tories (of course!) behaved monstrously. When the Queen made the Declaration of her marriage, it was not stated that Albert was "a Protestant Prince," and so perhaps he was a Papist. Baron Stockmar assured Lord Palmerston that Albert was of the German Protestant Church, which in all points of faith and ritual was identical

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 201.

† Girlhood, ii, p. 283.

with the English, and was pleased to think that his decided answer "had made the evil-minded harmless," but Melbourne seems to have mislaid this decided answer, and the Duke of Wellington moved and carried an amendment that the words "Protestant Prince" be inserted in the Declaration. What an unnecessary fuss, the Queen wrote to Albert "seeing that I *cannot* marry a Papist." *

But the Tories were to render themselves vastly more objectionable when the Government asked the House to grant an annuity of £50,000 a year for the Prince. This was founded on the precedent of annuities for wives of the Sovereign: Queen Caroline, and Queen Adelaide had received this, so also had Leopold on his marriage with Princess Charlotte. But Tories and Radicals in combination carried an amendment, by a majority of over a hundred, reducing it to £30,000. The Queen was furious: it was personal spite against her for having trounced Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington in the Bedchamber Plot. "They do everything," she wrote to Albert, "to degrade their young Sovereign in the eyes of the people." Uncle Leopold was as furious as she: he found the conduct of the Tories "*disgraceful*" and "*vulgar*" and "*disrespectful*." What made it more indecent was that he had set such a noble example by returning to the country £40,000 a year out of his annuity of £50,000 "not because I thought my income too large, . . . but from motives of political delicacy . . . I can only conclude by crying *shame, shame*." Albert was "shocked and exasperated" at such disrespect,† and the Queen said that neither the Duke of Wellington nor Sir Robert Peel should be asked to her wedding.

She was doing her best to load Albert with riches and honours, for with the humility of adoration she still felt

* Letters, I, i, p. 199. Emden, *Behind the Throne*, p. 46.

† *Ibid*, 1st Series, i, pp 214, 215

that he was making a great sacrifice in marrying her, but there was another aspect. Much as she adored him, she was the Queen of England, and he had to be sometimes reminded of that. He thought, for instance, he had the right to quarter the English Royal Arms with his own. Not at all. A Royal Command was necessary : she was quite willing to give it, but this boon must come through her.* A more important question was that of his Household. He had written to the Queen soon after leaving England, under the impression that he would have a say in the matter, a little essay worthy of Stockmar : "The maxim 'Tell me whom he associates with, and I will tell you who he is,' must here especially not be lost sight of. I should wish particularly that the selection should be made without regard to politics : for if I am really to keep myself free from all parties, my people must not belong exclusively to one side. It is very necessary that they should be chosen from both sides—the same number of Whigs as Tories. . . I know you will agree in my views."† But here he was disappointed : she told him it would not do, and he might rely on her to choose proper people for him. Again he wanted a German as his private secretary. Quite impossible : his Secretary must be English. In fact she had chosen him already, Mr. George Anson, who at present was Lord Melbourne's Secretary. That would not, as Albert thought, look like political partisanship, for Mr. Anson had never been in Parliament.‡ She was Queen, she knew what was right, and she chose his entire Household for him without his seeing any of them. Once more he wrote to her suggesting that the honeymoon at Windsor might be extended beyond the two or three days allotted to it. But no : "You have not at all understood the matter. You forget, my dearest Love, that

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 213.

† Early Years, pp. 266, 267.

‡ Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 206, 207.

I am the Sovereign, and that business can stop and wait for nothing . . . therefore two or three days is already a long time to be absent (from London) . . . This is also my own wish in every way." * Later, her views about the necessity of her being in London while Parliament was sitting were considerably modified.

BUT now it was time for Albert to make the great sacrifice. The Queen sent out an Embassy to Gotha for his investiture with the Garter, and after due festivities, Duke Ernest with his two sons set out for England in the Royal carriages despatched by the Queen for their conveyance.† She had decided that the wedding should not take place at Westminster Abbey, for that would be like another Coronation, but at the Chapel Royal, St. James's : the smaller size of the building also was convenient, for there would be little room for any of those detestable Tories. Then there was her mother : the Queen suggested that, as she would not drive to the wedding in full state, her mother should go with her. The very fact that she did not take that for granted shows perhaps how wide was their alienation.‡

Albert and his father and brother arrived on February 8, two days before the marriage. On the wedding morning the Queen sent to his bedroom in Buckingham Palace a little folded note without envelope :

"Dearest — How are you to-day, and have you slept well ? I have rested very well and feel very comfortable to-day. What weather ! I believe, however, the rain will cease.

"Send one word when you, my most dearly loved bridegroom, will be ready.

"Thy ever-faithful,
"Victoria R." §

* Letters, 1st Series, 1, p. 213.

† Early Years, p. 290.

‡ Girlhood, p. 296.

§ Letters, 1, 1, p. 217.

He was ready : he had been ready since October when he had decided to accept her devotion and to make the best use of the opportunities it afforded him to increase the happiness and welfare of England's millions.

After the marriage service there was a very formal banquet at Buckingham Palace, and the Queen bade adieu to her old life. She took off her white satin wedding gown, with its deep flounce of Honiton lace, made after an old design, and her diamond necklace and ear-rings, and put on a white silk gown trimmed with swansdown, and a white bonnet under the eaves of which nestled a sprig of orange blossoms. Then there was just time for ten minutes' talk alone with Lord Melbourne, and, with her invariable accuracy, she noted the hour "20 m to 4 till 10 m to 4." She praised his well-fitting coat — that was an old joke between them — and told him he must be down at Windsor two days hence in time for dinner. Did he guess then that his reign was over and another begun ? He said "God bless you, ma'am," and Albert came to fetch her, and they said goodbye to her mother and drove off to Windsor alone a few minutes before 4 o'clock.*

* *Girlhood*, II, pp 318-321.

CHAPTER VII

HOW happy too was Uncle Leopold. He had assured the Queen when first Albert accepted her devotion, that he almost shared the "feeling of old Zacharias. " 'Now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace !' " * Though Simeon is generally considered the author of the "Nunc Dimittis," his meaning was clear enough : the most magnificent of his architectural designs for the House of Coburg had been passed. The news that the Queen sent him from Windsor the day after her marriage must have made him feel more like Zacharias than ever. "Really," she wrote, "I do not think it *possible* for anyone in the world to be *happier* or as happy as I am. He is an Angel . . ." † From that considered opinion she never wavered. But still she was the Queen of England : two days of honeymoon she allowed herself, and then the whole Court followed the bridal pair down to Windsor. They danced after dinner that night and the next (for some reason this was considered rather indelicate) : then back they went to London, and Albert began to learn what it meant to have married the Queen of England.

In those intervening months he had thought it all out, and he meant, cautiously and gradually, so that her jealousy of her Sovereign rights should not be aroused, to make himself indispensable to her not only as an adored husband, but

* Letters, I, i, p 190.

† *Ibid.*, p. 217.

as her sole counsellor. He meant to permeate her, to sink his directing individuality in her, to put his will, his perceptions, his ability so much at her service as to be fused with her own. Stockmar was by him (for many years to come he lived in the Royal houses for six months of the year) and Stockmar was, as Brunnhilde to Wotan, the dyspeptic agent of Uncle Leopold's will, but he almost immediately began to fade out under the superimposed image of Albert himself. In the past, especially in that Italian tour, he had been a driving power, an inspiration to Albert, but now, though he remained a consultant, somebody to prepare vast memoranda on subjects about which the Royal pair desired to be instructed, he was no longer kindling Albert's ambition nor shaping his course for him. He wrote him exhaustive letters of advice, when he was away from England, but they more resembled a careful analysis of the principles on which Albert was himself acting, than the recommendation of how he should act. Perhaps Stockmar had taught him, but Albert, with his growing knowledge of his wife, was presently a better scholar than his master.

Or we may compare Stockmar to some tug that had towed a vessel away from the quay-side at Coburg into mid-stream, but now the hawser was cast off, and the ship began to progress under its own steam. The tug continued for years to hover round the ship it had towed out, hooting occasionally when fogs formed and often coming alongside, but no longer in charge. If anyone was in charge, it was rather the Prince's private secretary, young George Anson, whose appointment by the Queen he had demurred to, but who at once became his valued and intimate friend — Anson, said the Prince, was almost like a brother to him, and he was his companion in a more intimate sense than Stockmar had ever been. Stockmar indeed recognised this himself, and only three months after the marriage he consulted Anson on

a point which he felt unable to tackle himself, namely, the influence of Lehzen on the Queen, and the reaction of that on the Prince. "The Prince leans more on you," he said to Anson, "than on anyone else, and gives you entire confidence." He thought the Queen was not "so ingenuous as she was two years ago," which was another way of stating that she had ceased to be open with him. Not till Anson's death in 1849 did Stockmar regain his position as confidential adviser to the Royal pair.*

The marriage had necessitated certain domestic changes. Hitherto the Queen's mother had been lodged in Buckingham Palace and had her rooms at Windsor, but these were wanted for the Queen's husband, and within a month the Duchess was gone. The King of Hanover still had his suite in St. James's Palace, where, thirty years ago, that very unpleasant incident about his valet had occurred, but he refused to give them up, and the Queen took Ingestre House in Belgrave Square for her mother, until, in the autumn the death of Aunt Augusta left Clarence House vacant for her. Albert was very fond of his Aunt, the long estrangement between her and Victoria was distressing, and he set quietly to work to bring mother and daughter together again. With equal tact he refrained from immediately attempting to get rid of Victoria's old governess Baroness Lehzen. The Queen was greatly attached to her: Lehzen had always been on her side as comforter and companion in those unhappy days of her childhood, but she had no proper perception of the difference which the Queen's marriage had made to her own position, and out of a natural but stupid jealousy she clung to a control that she should have relinquished, interfering in matters that did not remotely concern her. But had Albert in these early days tried to get rid of her, he would probably have failed, and it was wiser

* Letters, I, i, p. 224.

to tolerate a nuisance rather than risk a defeat. Stockmar's opinion was that the Baroness's influence over the Queen was stronger than she knew, but Albert's method of acquiring a paramount influence himself was the surest way of sapping the other.

If the Prince was to make a success of this venture for which he had sacrificed himself, the utmost delicacy and deliberation were needed, and there his feminine qualities were invaluable. Uncle Leopold might be the final authority on "Sovereignty as a Trade": Stockmar might supply encyclopaedias on "What the Husband of a Sovereign Ought to Know," the Queen might at first assure Albert that he did not understand the English, but he understood her, which mattered most of all. With flawless intuition he saw that she figured herself as his chivalrous protector in this alien land, striving in everything to please him, and his influence began at once to make itself felt. Only lately the Queen, furious at the Tories docking Albert's annuity, had sworn that she would not ask the Duke of Wellington, that old rebel, to her wedding, but she asked him to one of the first dinner-parties she gave at Buckingham Palace, and how could she fail to notice that Albert, too noble, too high to remember that the Duke had helped to deprive him of an extra £20,000 a year, was most civil to him? Albert saw that it was idiotic of Victoria to treat any political party in the State, which must before very long be in power again, as if the object of their holding office was to snub the Crown, but of course it would not do to put it like that. A little civility to the Duke of Wellington — after all he had done something for his country once — would be more judicious. And had she not better reconsider her expressed resolve never to have anything more to do with Sir Robert Peel? So he made friends himself with Sir Robert, and Lord

Melbourne highly approved. That was an early step, but significant.

The acquiring of political influence, which from the first was part of the Prince's programme of "promoting the good of so many," was a matter that had to be gone about very cautiously, for, as the Queen had warned him, the English would strongly resent any sort of direct interference on his part in politics, and it was only through building up in her a conviction of his wisdom and discretion that he could hope to establish himself. She was very jealous of her position as Sovereign : she and her Ministers and they alone were directors of the Realm. Physically she adored him, she rightly appreciated the nobility of his character, and her protective tenderness of the Angel who had left all for her sake was a valuable asset to him, which he did not neglect. When, a fortnight after his marriage, his father, Duke Ernest, with his suite in floods of tears at leaving the beloved young Prince in England, went back to Coburg, he told Victoria that she "had never known a father, and could not therefore feel what he did." Brother Ernest, however, remained on for a couple of months, and their parting in May was even more desolating. They sang "Abschied" together, and when Ernest had gone, all that Albert, left alone with his bride, could say was "Such things are hard to bear." Her heart was wrung for him. "Oh ! how I did feel for my dearest precious husband at this moment," she wrote in her Journal. "Father, brother, friends, country — all he has left and all for me. God grant I may be the happy person, the *most* happy person, to make this dearest, blessed being happy and contented ! What is in my power to make him happy, I will do."

Albert recognised that this was a propitious moment to advance a step. She knew he was lonely, and he reproached

her for not treating him with confidence either on "trivial matters," or on anything connected with politics. This disturbed her, and she consulted Lord Melbourne, acknowledging that it was wrong of her not to do so ; she said it was indolent of her but she preferred to talk to him on subjects other than these. Melbourne urged her to be more open with him on political matters ; he was anxious "that the Queen should tell and shew him everything connected with public affairs." * She took this excellent advice, and before the marriage was six months old, he was supplied by Melbourne with Foreign Office despatches, and occasionally, by the Queen's special invitation, he was present at her interviews with her Ministers. That was a great step. As for the "trivial matters," these no doubt referred to the running of the establishments at Buckingham Palace and Windsor, for, as Albert wrote to his friend Prince William of Lowenstein, he was not the master of his house but only the husband of its mistress. But indeed the Queen was scarcely mistress there herself : the control of the staff and the stable and the kitchens was in the charge of various officers of State, and the only way to get anything done was through Baroness Lehzen. She would have to go, but the time had not come for that, and meantime the Prince noted the million signs of a ludicrous extravagance that yielded the minimum of comfort, and he instructed Stockmar to do a little quiet investigation into the domestic economy of Palaces and embody his discoveries in a memorandum.

Socially, the Prince was not making a very good impression. He was shy, he was ill at ease among these aliens, and he cloaked his shyness with a stiff and frigid dignity. He lacked the light touch which gives effervescence to social intercourse, and women could hardly fail to feel his punctilious unconsciousness of their charms. Uncle Leopold had

* *Early Years*, pp. 312-337.

thought that when he was sixteen he was getting "an English look," but at twenty he had certainly grown out of it. Nor did his tastes show any trace of Anglicization, he was steadfast to that unfortunate resolve of his to remain a true German. He was not unathletic, he rode well, and while a student at Bonn had won a fencing competition,* but he thought of all sports, shooting and hunting and the like, merely as salubrious diversions and did not understand, nor could he, the English mania for taking them seriously and spending whole days in the saddle or the coverts. On the other hand he regarded as high and ennobling objects, worthy of a man's serious study, pursuits which the barbarous English considered only as pretty diversions for a woman. It was nice for women to record in their sketch-books the beauties of nature, to stand up and sing after dinner or removing rings and bracelets to sit down and play. But Albert wooed the Muses with reverent ardour ; he was never happier than when improvising on his new organ at Buckingham Palace ; he encouraged the Queen in her singing and sang himself with her. These duets were not private diversions only : they gave a concert at the Palace, conducted by Signor Michele Costa, and the Royal pair sang "Non funesta crudele" by Ricci, and the Queen sang the trio "Dunque il mio bene" from Mozart's "Magic Flute" with Rubini and Lablache, the most admired tenor and bass of the Italian opera and they both took part in choruses by Haydn and Mendelssohn. In emulation of this melodious evening Lady Normanby, the Mistress of the Robes, gave another musical party in which amateurs sang with professionals. On this occasion the Prince was not singing, and overcome by his usual evening somnolence, he had a quiet sleep, sitting next his hostess and looking beautiful.† When

* Early Years, p. 143.

† Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 119-124.

there was not music he would have liked to leaven the rather doughy evenings by having as guests literary and scientific folk so that conversation might be really improving, but there the Queen put her foot down. She had consulted Uncle Leopold about making friends with artistic people, and he had warned her that they were not very suitable folk to have about, and hoped that Albert would not get intimate with them : also, so Lord Melbourne thought, she did not like the idea of not being able to take her fair share in conversation on such high topics.* Again though the Prince liked sitting on after dinner with the men after the women had gone, he drank very sparingly, and the conversation, apt in those days to get a little lewd, was such that the women need not have gone, and the men soon came up-stairs, and the Duchess of Kent was set down to her whist and Albert to his games of double chess. Such a type with its feminine tastes, its unclubbable qualities, its ill-judged dignity, its wholly un-English traits was not likely to be popular. He was unlike a man in many things and like the schoolmaster abroad in others.

But in spite of his odd tastes and stiff ways, those who knew him better found in him high and invaluable qualities. The English throne in 1837 was extremely rickety, and stood in strong need of repair : possibly it would even have crashed under the occupancy of more sons of George III. They were extravagant and insolent and immoral and the country was thoroughly tired of Hanoverian brethren. There had been great enthusiasm when the girl of eighteen became Queen : she was so small and so dignified and childish and so very unlike her uncles. But in these three years of her reign that chivalrous welcome of her had spent itself. She had become exceedingly unpopular over the tragic affair of Lady Flora Hastings and her most unwise hostility to the

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 256.

ories, and had antagonised one of the two great political parties. The scurrility of the press, its cartoons, its rhymes, its incredible caddishness towards those who could not defend themselves, were a resumption of the attacks on the irreputable sons of George III. These had to be borne in silence, but already Albert's good sense was doing much to conciliate the just resentment at the Queen's high-handed and obstinate dealings last summer, and he wrote to his mother : "The Tories are very friendly to me, as I am also to them." That was a happier relation to them than that of a virulent fire-breathing Queen who six months before had declared that they were "doing everything to degrade their young Sovereign in the eyes of her people."

Then he had greatly cordialized the relations between the Queen and her mother, and before long that reconciliation warmed into love. He was a peace-maker, and among his useful operations was a tranquillising of his wife's impulsive and violent temper : Uncle Leopold had exercised just such control over Princess Charlotte before either of them was born. The Queen adored him : he was daily getting more perfect in her eyes, and his deep seriousness of purpose, his conscientiousness, his industry, and, above all, his untarnishable respectability were just what was needed to obliterate from the mind of the nation the Hanoverian misconception of monarchy. Perhaps, for all his oddities, his pedantry, he might prove to be exactly the man for the moment.

In June an adventitious circumstance suddenly caused a crudescence of loyalty. The two were driving out one evening up Constitution Hill, meaning to pay a call on the Duchess of Kent in Belgrave Square, when a crazy young fellow, called Edward Oxford, fired two pistol shots at them from the distance of five or six yards. They both behaved with the most unassumed coolness, and after the man had been seized, drove on to the Duchess's house so that she

should not be alarmed by any chance report that might reach her. After that they went on for their drive in the Park to show the public (as Albert characteristically wrote to his grandmother) "that we had not, on account of what had happened, lost all confidence in them." Though he sincerely despised popularity, nothing could have been more popular than such simple pluck, and at Opera and race-course they were hailed with universal enthusiasm. The crowds in the street, and her Ministers in Council must need applaud that most popular of all virtues, and no doubt the incident had a sentimental effect on the reception next month of the Regency Bill. The Queen, it was known, would have a baby in November, and the Bill provided that, should she die in childbed, like Princess Charlotte, or at any time before the heir to the throne came of age, the Prince should be appointed Regent without any controlling Council. He would thus, until the yet unborn child attained the age of eighteen, be to all intents and purposes the King of England. Uncle Sussex, a champion of the Royal Uncles, made a speech in the House of Lords against the Bill on its second reading, but nobody took the slightest notice of him, or troubled to reply. It was not very pretty of him, for only three months before the Queen had created his second morganatic wife, Lady Cecilia Buggin, Duchess of Inverness, which was very civil. The third reading passed both Houses unanimously, and when the Queen prorogued Parliament in August, Albert sat next the throne,* to which in case of a deplorable contingency, he would practically succeed.

The Queen's first child was born on November 21, 1840, and Ministers of the Crown, the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London were in a room outside the open door of the bedchamber to be witnesses to the authentic

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 126.

existence of a new-born baby. Then Dr. Locock's voice was heard from within, a little disappointed, but appreciative of the rank of the august pilgrim. "Oh, Madam!" he said, "it is a Princess": and a voice from the bed replied, "Well, next time it will be a Prince." During the mother's swift convalescence, Albert, she wrote in her Journal, looked after her as if he had been her mother. He was very busy, for by special and rather peremptory order, the Queen directed that the despatch-boxes from the Foreign Office, which had been withheld for a day or two after the birth, until she could attend to affairs of State again, should be sent to him. She rather demurred to Uncle Leopold's hope that this daughter would be the first of many children, and wrote to him that he could not really wish her to be "*Mamma d'une nombreuse famille*, for I think you will see with me the great inconvenience a large family would be to us all, and particularly the country, independent of the hardship and inconvenience to myself." * Doubtless, as regards the country, she was thinking what an intolerable expense her uncles had been to it, but all these objections soon ceased to weigh with her.

The Court went to Windsor for Christmas, and the Queen, who previously had far preferred the gaiety and bustle of London, began to feel differently about the country, and it was with great reluctance that she came back to town at the end of January. The reason was not far to seek: Albert hated late hours and the dense air of London, and he felt in Paradise on the hill above the Thames. "Now I am free: now I can breathe," he used to exclaim, and he and the Queen would take Eos his greyhound out for a walk before they settled down to work, and in the afternoon he was busy out of doors with the new pleasure ground he was laying out below the terrace and the building of the new stables.

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 255.

She developed sympathetic symptoms: the "weight and thickness of the atmosphere" in London gave her a headache, and she wrote in her Journal, "I told Albert that formerly I was too happy to go to London, and wretched to leave it, and now since the blessed hour of our marriage, I dislike and am unhappy to leave the country and could be content and happy never to go to town. . . The solid pleasures of a peaceful, quiet yet merry life in the country, with my inestimable husband and friend, my all in all, are far more durable than the amusements of London, though we don't despise or dislike these sometimes." * Indeed these winter weeks at Windsor, with Albert dancing the baby in his arms, were a renewal of that very short honeymoon, eleven months ago, and never was there a more ecstatic bride. And how proud she was of his utter indifference to the charms of other women! Lord Melbourne, in his flip-pant way told her that these were "early days to boast." Not a good joke, she thought, and the future showed how wrong he was to make such silly innuendos. She loved having Albert all to herself; she was a little jealous if he talked too much even to men.†

But in spite of this high domestic felicity, there was political trouble brewing over the question of Protection. In this summer of 1841 the Whig Government was tottering, and once more as in 1839 the Queen was threatened with losing Lord Melbourne. But now the prospect was not so desolate, for Albert was with her and she resolved to face it quietly and philosophically.‡ The question of the appointment of new Ladies, on which she had been so fiercely obstinate two years before, was bound to come up again. Melbourne was afraid that if Sir Robert Peel formed a

* Early Life of Prince Consort, pp. 338, 339.

† Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 256, 395.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

Ministry, he might insist "as a point of honour" on the Queen's giving them all up. But something might be done in the way of friendly negotiations before the point actually arose. Neither Melbourne nor Prince Albert could take any direct hand in this, and it was agreed between them that the most fit person was that very discreet George Anson, the Prince's Secretary. It was a delicate business, but Peel in four secret interviews with him, behaved in the friendliest manner. He affirmed, "I would waive every pretension to office, I declare to God ! sooner than that my acceptance of it should be attended with any personal humiliation to the Queen . . . it would be repulsive to my feelings that Her Majesty should part with any of her Ladies as the result of a fixed stipulation on my part." He understood that Melbourne, who he knew was behind the overtures, was only desirous to make things easy for the Queen, and that was his aim also. With such good-will on both sides, a repetition of the former crisis was unthinkable, and Peel, still negotiating with Anson, asked that the Prince should transmit to him a list of the Ladies the Queen would wish to be of her Household, and he would put them before his colleagues (given that he was asked to be Prime Minister) as his own suggestions.* There surely was evident the fruit of the Prince's admirable good sense in making friends with the man to whom the Queen had sworn eternal enmity. At the ensuing Elections a large Tory majority was returned, and in August the Whigs resigned, and the Queen asked Sir Robert Peel to form a Government. It was bitter to lose Lord Melbourne : for over four years she had seen him almost daily, and during that period only once had as many as eleven days elapsed without her having a talk with him. In his last interview he had spoken to her in the highest terms of Prince Albert's judgment and discretion, and, since

* Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 268-274.

he himself was leaving her, she could not do better than to seek the Prince's inestimable advice on all political matters, and confidently rely on his judgment.*

With this severance of constant personal intercourse it was only reasonable that the Queen and Melbourne should correspond ; she hoped, she told him, to hear from him frequently, and he promised her that he would devote himself to giving her "such information and advice as may be serviceable to Your Majesty with the sole view of promoting Your Majesty's public interests and private happiness." This was a perfectly correct proceeding : the Queen had every right to seek advice and counsel from any friend on any subject, provided she acted in accordance with the decisions of her Cabinet, and it was quite in order that, when Lord Melbourne suggested Lord Heytesbury as a suitable Ambassador at Vienna, she should put his name before her new Foreign Secretary, Lord Aberdeen. Melbourne, on his side, did his utmost to smooth Peel's way for him, and establish friendly relations between the Queen and the new Ministry. She thought for instance, when they came to kiss hands, that they looked "cross." He assured her that they were only shy and embarrassed, and that Peel was most anxious to work harmoniously with her.†

Prince Albert thus began to take Melbourne's place with the Queen, and closely associated with him was his secretary, George Anson. He often sat next her at dinner as Melbourne had always done, and she encouraged him to use great freedom of speech with her. She told him that she could not get over Peel's awkwardness of manner : on which Anson asked her if she had tried, and the Queen with the utmost good-humour said she thought she really had. A few evenings later she told him that she had asked Lord Melbourne to stay

* Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 311, 320, 321.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 324, 326, 329.

at Windsor : was it by accident or intent that he had not answered, and what did Anson think about it ? He told her frankly that, after the strong speech Melbourne had made against the Government, such a visit would not be wise. She told him how Lord John Russell had once warned her not to ask her House of Commons to pay for the new stables at Windsor and Buckingham Palace which cost £70,000 : it would be a very unpopular request. Anson agreed and added that it would be very imprudent of the Prince to think of suggesting any increase in his annuity.*

All these were very intimate topics, and when Baron Stockmar, who had spent the summer with his much neglected family at Coburg, returned to England, he found himself a little out in the cold. He disapproved of this correspondence between the Queen and Lord Melbourne, and by stopping it he might establish himself again as the Invisible Man. It was this far more than his desire to eliminate Melbourne's influence with the Queen, so that Albert might reign alone, that prompted his interference, for Melbourne was entirely at one with him in wishing to establish the Prince as her political counsellor and confidant, and had constantly urged that course on her. The Baron therefore wrote one of his famous Memoranda, which he asked Anson to read aloud to Melbourne, and "orally to add what amplification might be necessary." He informed Melbourne that the correspondence was an "*essential injustice*" to Sir Robert Peel : it was fraught with imminent danger to the Queen, Lord Melbourne himself and the State. Melbourne stood the Memorandum well enough, but the oral amplifications were too much for him, and he completely lost his temper ("God eternally d-mn it !" etc. etc.) † After this ebullition he took no further notice of Stockmar's Memorandum, and con-

* Letters, I, i, pp. 337, 339.

† *Ibid.*, p. 341.

tinued his correspondence with the Queen exactly as before. So, after allowing three weeks for repentance and noting none, Stockmar went to see Melbourne in person, and with inimitable solemnity gave him a good talking to. He expounded to him his reading of the English Constitution in regard to the Sovereign's deliberative functions : he appealed to his better nature : he advised him to wait till the Queen's second confinement, expected in November, was over, and then he really must tell her that this correspondence must cease. Painful as it would be, such a course was surely dictated to him by his deep sense of what he owed "to the country, to your Queen and to yourself." The Baron stated in the inevitable Memorandum he wrote on this interview that Lord Melbourne was deeply impressed, and, since he had given him leave to continue the correspondence till the propitious event had taken place, Melbourne wrote to the Queen five letters in the next ten days.*

The propitious event which Stockmar had fixed on as a suitable time to close the correspondence took place on November 9, 1841. That morning the Queen was transacting business till after ten o'clock, but then hurried messages were despatched to the great Officers of State to come at once to Buckingham Palace for that barbarous ritual of waiting in the next room for the labour to be done, and before eleven struck a male heir to the English throne was born, even as the mother had prophesied less than a year ago, that the next child would be a Prince. "A wonderfully strong and large child," she wrote to Uncle Leopold, "with very large dark blue eyes, a finely formed but somewhat large nose, and a pretty little mouth : I *hope* and *pray* he may be like his dearest Papa. He is to be called Albert, and Edward is to be his second name."

* Letters, I, i, pp. 352-354.

Uncle Leopold must have reminded her that she had him to thank for her matrimonial felicity (which was indeed true) but the bliss of it had expunged everything else from her mind, and again she wrote : "You will understand *how* fervent my prayers, and I am sure *everybody's* must be, to see him resemble his angelic dearest Father in *every every* respect, both in body and mind. Oh ! my dearest Uncle, I am sure if you knew *how* happy, how blessed I feel, and how *proud* I feel in possessing such a perfect being as my husband, as he is, and if you think you have been instrumental in bringing about this union, it must gladden your heart !" *

By the end of the month the Queen had quite recovered, and Stockmar noticed with pain that the deep impression he had made on Melbourne seemed to have faded for he had not done as he was bidden and ceased writing to her ; indeed his letters were longer and more frequent than ever. Another Memorandum—it might be called a regretful Bull—was therefore advisable. The Baron was disappointed in Melbourne, for he had hoped that he "would be glad to take advantage of *any fair opportunity* which might contribute towards that devoutly to be wished-for object, viz. to let a certain correspondence die a natural death." He had seen Peel lately and the Prime Minister said : "But this I must insist on and I do assure you that that moment I was to learn that the Queen takes advice upon public matters in another place, I shall throw up. . ." Stockmar concluded by reminding Melbourne that the time had now arrived when he had told him that this "decisive step" should be taken, and trusted in his candour and manliness. In order to secure an answer at once, he had instructed his messenger to wait, but Melbourne thought it unnecessary to detain him and merely acknowledged the

* Letters, I, i, p. 366.

letter and promised to write.* But more than a month afterwards the Bull still remained unanswered and unregarded; this innocuous correspondence flowed happily on, and Melbourne aggravated his want of manliness by staying at Windsor in January 1842, which the Baron had desired him not to do. Peel, for his part, was perfectly cognizant of the correspondence, but did not want to interfere with it at all, since the Queen was evidently not receiving or listening to advice that set her against her Ministers. On the contrary, both she and the Prince were growing in confidence and friendliness towards him, and, six months after he had taken Office, instead of "throwing up," he recorded his great content with their mutual relations in a manner that shows how little he sympathised with Stockmar's meddling: "My relations with her Majesty are most satisfactory. The Queen has acted towards me not merely with perfect fidelity and honour, but with great kindness and consideration. There is every facility for the despatch of public business, a scrupulous and most punctual discharge of every public duty, and an exact understanding of the relations of a constitutional Sovereign to her advisers."† Though Anson round about Christmas thought that the correspondence did not maintain its "pristine vigour," it soon revived and flourished exceedingly, and Melbourne's letters were full of such sage and helpful political advice as would assist rather than hinder the cordial relations between the Queen and her Ministers. When eventually it became less abundant that was not owing to Stockmar's forbidding it, but because the Queen and the Prince had learned to trust Peel and his Tory Government as much as they had trusted Melbourne and his Whigs.

* Letters, I, i, pp. 360-363.

† Peel Papers, ii, p. 544.

This correspondence has been dealt with at some little length in order to clear up the misconception that has arisen about Stockmar's position. It has been held that, as the Invisible Man, his hold over the Queen and the Prince and English politics was prodigious, and that these peremptory dealings with Melbourne were an example of it.* But the records prove precisely the opposite : Melbourne took no notice whatever of him or of his bombardments. Stockmar's son, who compiled his Memoirs, seems to have been conscious of this, and very judiciously omits all mention of this signal defeat. The Queen and the Prince were very fond of the Baron, he had come to England with Uncle Leopold before either of them was born ; Melbourne, Peel, Aberdeen and Palmerston in turn had the firmest belief in his integrity, and they liked a talk with the shrewd caustic old man, and he enjoyed it too ; and then he went to his room and put down all the good advice he had given them. Sometimes they had agreed with him and then all was well ; sometimes they thought otherwise, and then Stockmar recorded what a sad mess they had made through not listening to him. Whenever, as happened more than once, he interfered in political matters, we find that, as here, his schemings were singularly fruitless. The public misjudged him : his constant intimacy with the Prince led to the belief that he was a sinister foreign adviser, potent and mysterious, whereas he was an honest dyspeptic old gentleman, useful to him in many ways, with the harmless foible of thinking that he directed and controlled his old pupil. This conviction remained with him, and in 1855, shortly before he left England for good, he wrote of Albert and the Queen : "They have passed the point at which leading is required." But evidence that

* Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, pp. 105, 106.

he had ever led them in their political dealings with the government is entirely lacking, and Albert had long ago assumed the position for which Melbourne himself had always considered him so admirably fit.

CHAPTER VIII

UNTIL November 9, 1841 no male heir had been born to the Sovereign since the birth of George IV in 1762, and there were weighty points of procedure to be settled now which had not arisen then. Little Albert Edward was Earl of Chester from the moment he first drew breath, and within a month his mother created him Prince of Wales, but a heraldic battle raged over his Arms. His father had the right to the Arms of a Duke of Saxony and wished that his son should bear them quartered with the Arms of England. Since Albert wished it, the Queen ordered that this should be done, but it was not quite so simple. The Earl Marshal had to instruct the Herald's College to see that the coat was correct, and the Heralds strongly objected to the Royal Arms of England being quartered with those of so insignificant a realm : they pronounced it most derogatory to England. So the Queen with the same firmness as she had shewn in the Bedchamber Plot wrote to say that such was her command, and the Heralds on behalf of the nation had to swallow the insult. Then was the infant to be prayed for in church as "The Prince of Wales," or "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales" ? Again his father had to be considered : Albert, though a Royal Highness as well as his son, was only prayed for as "Prince Albert." So, liturgically, "The Prince of Wales," was settled on as being a sufficient identification for purposes of orison.

The christening followed on January 25, 1842, and the rival claims of Germany and England must be weighed. Germany won, for whereas there were only two English godparents, the Duke of Cambridge and Princess Augusta, King Frederick William IV of Prussia, Prince Ferdinand of Saxe-Coburg, and the Duchesses of Saxe-Coburg and Saxe-Gotha were chosen for Germany. Uncle Leopold was left out because Uncle Cumberland, King of Hanover, would have resented not being asked, if Uncle Leopold was, and the Queen would not have the Hanoverian Ogre at any price. Prince Albert settled all details of the ceremony, and ruthlessly scrapped an anthem which Sir George Elvey had written for the occasion, preferring Handel's Hallelujah Chorus. All went well, except that Lord Melbourne had been prevented from coming owing to ill-health. The Queen was much grieved: it was the only important ceremony since her accession at which he had not been present. It was bad enough his not being in his old place (*i. e.* on her left at dinner) and now he could not even come to the christening! But a second disaster followed, for at a subsequent shooting-party Uncle Ferdinand peppered Albert's favourite grey-hound Eos. Melbourne was "in despair" when he heard of it, and Uncle Leopold writing from Brussels wished (without mentioning names) that Ferdinand had shot some other member of the family instead.*

The Queen had been feeling "low" after her son's birth, and the family of four went to stay at George IV's Pavilion at Brighton for the sake of the bracing airs. One can imagine with how horrified an eye Albert, whose taste in architecture and mural decoration were soon to brighten the Isle of Wight, beheld the corridor of flamboyant dragons. The parents went back to London and in May the Queen

* Letters, I, i, pp. 376, 379.

gave a great fancy dress ball at which they appeared as Edward III and Queen Philippa. The sculptor Theed was commissioned to make life size statues of them in their picturesque costumes : these were the first of the Albert Marbles which presently grew so numerous. There followed two more of those uncomfortable demonstrations, hardly to be called attempts on the Queen's life, but rather self-advertising displays of weak-minded young men armed with pistols. One Sunday morning as they drove back from service at St. James's Chapel, the Prince thought he saw a man in the cheering crowd point a pistol at them. No report followed, and nobody else saw anything except a boy who came to the Master of the Household and told him that he had seen the same, and heard the man mutter, "Fool that I was not to have fired." Husband and wife, consulted together, and concocted an amazing plan. They determined to give the man a second chance (in the hopes that he would be arrested), for that risk was preferable to being haunted by the feeling that they were in danger whenever they took the air. So next day the Green Park was peppered with policemen in plain clothes, and they drove out again, full of courage, but taking the precaution, as the Queen wrote to Uncle Leopold, of having "the two Equerries riding so close on each side (of the carriage) that they must have been hit if anybody had." * It may have been owing to this precaution that Sir Robert Peel sanctioned this hazard : if he was assured that the only casualties would be among Equerries, and if those valiant gentlemen were prepared to take the risk, it was not his business to object. It is more likely, however, that neither he nor they thought there was the slightest danger. The plan succeeded admirably : the man fired again, but no more than a small click was heard which was probably that of

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 398.

the trigger being pulled. The man—a boy of about twenty—was arrested, and the Queen thanked God they had had such an escape. Albert would certainly have been hit on the first attempt, had the pistol been loaded, and an Equerry on the second. A month afterwards there was yet another of those farcical “attempts”: this time a crippled boy, John Bean, pointed an unloaded pistol at the Queen’s carriage. It was ridiculous to call such exhibitions high treason and punishable with death, and a Bill was passed “for the protection and security of her Majesty’s person,” assigning to these miscreants imprisonment and a birching, which was far more suitable.

This autumn (1842) the Queen and her husband visited Scotland for the first time. She was very proud of the Scotch blood that ran in her veins, and from now till the end of her life she was happiest in the Highlands. Her account of the tour bubbles with that excitement and vivid observation which new experiences always brought her. It started at Edinburgh, and they were escorted through the town at foot’s pace by the Royal Archers, who, it thrilled her to learn, were a body of noblemen and gentlemen established by her remote ancestor James I of Scotland to form a personal bodyguard to the Sovereign of Scotland, and that was a wonderful inheritance! They stayed at Dalkeith with the Duke of Buccleuch (a distant and illegitimate relative through the Duke of Monmouth), and oatmeal porridge and Finnan haddock were new articles of diet. Albert was equally enthusiastic: he was sure that the Acropolis at Athens, though he had never seen it, could not be finer than Arthur’s Seat, and Perth reminded him of Basle, and the view from Birnam Wood of his beloved Thuringen, and many of the people looked like Germans, so it all seemed homelike to his eye. He had his first experience of stalking, which, in spite of his previous reluc-

tance to waste the shining hours in sport, he much enjoyed. "Without doubt," he wrote to Prince Charles of Leiningen, "deerstalking is one of the most fatiguing, but it is also one of the most interesting of pursuits," though it was a surprise to find that Scotch forests did not contain a single tree. The Queen duly noted his pleasure, and perhaps the fact that Lord Breadalbane's house "was a kind of Castle built of granite," contained the germ of a future scheme. There were sword-dances, there were bagpipes and feudalities, and kilts of Campbell tartan and Scotch reels, in which she and Albert (though dropping with fatigue after his deer-stalking) took part. Altogether it was an enchanting holiday among these Highlands and "chivalrous, fine, active Highlanders"; there was a quiet, a retirement, a wildness, a liberty, and a solitude that had a tremendous charm for them both; and the Queen wrote to Lord Melbourne, "We *must* come back for longer another time." *

They travelled from London to Windsor by the railway which had not long been opened: to travel at all by this ferociously rapid means of transport (only three-quarters of an hour's journey) was still regarded as rather perilous, and prudent people saw that their wills were in order before they embarked. Hitherto when the Queen journeyed the Master of the Horse and the Royal coachman were in charge, but now they could be no more than passengers, with an engine-driver as coachman, and a guard for Master of the Horse. All was well at Windsor: Sarah, Lady Lyttelton was now in command of the Royal nurseries, and Vicky, also known as Pussie, had grown a great deal, and had become very independent. The baby, alas, was sadly backward for a child of ten months, but Albert and Stockmar were already beginning to think about schemes for

* Leaves from the Journal of our Life in the Highlands, pp. 4-42. Letters, I, i, p. 430.

his education. "Education," said Stockmar, "begins at birth." Melbourne when consulted was not so encouraging. He thought that education rarely altered character. But then he was getting a little cynical : in answer to the Queen's enthusiasm about Scotland he had said that the drawback to that country was that the Scotch thought so highly of it.*

But though the correspondence between him and the Queen which, more than a year ago, Stockmar had ordered to cease, flourished as vigorously as ever, the Baron must have been gratified to find, when he returned from Coburg where again he had spent the summer, that Lehzen was going. As far as we can tell that was settled quite amicably between the Queen, the Prince and her. The Queen had two children already, and a third was coming, and there was no longer any place for her in the intimate domestic life. Moreover, the Queen, in her restored attachment with her mother had learned that in these unhappy dissensions of her youth, Lehzen, though always taking her part, had been mischievous, stirring up strife, instead of working for a better understanding : † since her marriage also she had shewn herself jealous and interfering, as a middle-aged woman, once governess and confidante, is apt to do. Her significance, as the Invisible Woman behind the throne, corresponding to Stockmar the Invisible Man, was nothing more than a fable of gossip ; she was a devoted, harmless old lady, growing tiresome, for whom, as she saw herself, there was no longer a place. The parting was perfectly friendly, and the Queen continued to write constantly to her in her home at Bückeburg, where she lived with her sister, for the rest of her life.

With Lehzen's departure, Stockmar could get on with his

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 434.

† *Ibid.*, I, iii, p. 439.

investigations into the domestic mismanagement of the Royal Households in London and at Windsor and on this subject he prepared the most exhaustive of his Memoranda up to date. That admirable document* revealed an incredible condition of muddle. Four officers of State, the Lord Steward, the Lord Chamberlain, the Chief Commissioner of Woods and Forests and the Master of the Horse were responsible between them for the fabric, the Staff, the service, the catering, and the warming of the houses, but the departments, intended to be distinct, overlapped to a degree which even the Baron's exhaustive Memorandum did not fully appreciate. The Lord Chamberlain, for instance, it states, had control of the fabric and decoration of the interiors, but yet we find the Queen applying to Lord Lincoln (Chief Commissioner for Woods and Forests) for the hastening on of the appointments of the new Chapel at Buckingham Palace.† Possibly Stockmar's sardonic pen got the better of him when he reported that if the Queen thought the dining-room cold the fire could not be lit without the co-operation of two departments, for we may be quite certain that if she wanted a fire it would have been lit in less than no time, but there was no question about the waste and the lack of a general control. Every day fresh candles, bouquets of them, were placed in all the living rooms, and whether they were used or not they were removed next day and became the perquisites of the footmen. There were forty housemaids at Windsor, and another forty at Buckingham Palace, so that these young ladies received board and lodging and £45 a year for six months' work. Footmen were employed in relays: one third were on duty, one third on half duty, and the remainder resting. Housemaids were in the province of the Lord Chamberlain, foot-

* Stockmar, *Memoirs*, ii, pp. 118-126.

† Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 466.

-men in that of the Master of the Horse, cooks curtsied to the Lord Steward. Pointless extravagances were not wholly balanced by equally ludicrous economies : match boxes were scarce and there was a rule that no visitor should have more than two candles in his bedroom. So the ingenious Madame Titens, who was at Windsor to sing to the Queen, cut hers in half and made four, by the light of which she could dress.*

The Prince having sufficiently mastered Stockmar's memorandum (it took time) went forward with reforms. This quadruple control of non-resident Officers of State was the first thing to remedy, and the Master of the Household was put in control of all departments. The Prince reduced the staff, he reduced their wages, he put an end to absurd perquisites and payments for long obsolete services. Perfectly unreasonable criticisms were showered on him for these excellent economies, as if waste was a virtue in exalted houses : he was cartooned creeping about to collect candle-ends. A more reasonable objection might be found to his appointment of Germans to responsible posts in the staff. The pages, for instance, were under the control of the German courier, Heller, and one day Master Kennaird wanted to throw him over the banisters. . .

THE New Year of 1843 opened gaily at Windsor with two dances, and once more, as a year ago, Lord Melbourne stayed there. But the glamour had faded, and the Queen knew it. She "*almost* fancied happy old times were returned : but alas ! the dream is past." She had awoke from it to a dawn brighter than any dreams, but to him it was not dawn to which he had awoke, but to an evening obscured by age and maladies. To Melbourne those three years, when every evening almost he had sat by her sofa,

* Jerrold, *Married Life of Queen Victoria*, p. 220.

and made her laugh with his cynical or witty answers to her innumerable questions, had been of the quality of romance : but to her already, with Albert to shew her the better way, they seemed an idle profitless time. She still wrote to Melbourne frequently, she consulted him about the education of the children, about Bertie's position as Prince of Wales, about political matters, even about the Speech from the throne at the opening of Parliament, drawn up for her by her Tory Government, but he was fading out from her mind, and she saw him less and less.*

She was expecting a third child, and she proposed to Sir Robert Peel that Albert should hold Levées for her. But she was anxious about the way her people would take that : perhaps it would be better that they should not kneel and kiss his hand, and it must be known that presentations to him would be equivalent to presentations to her. "*He and I,*" she wrote to Uncle Leopold, "*must be one . . . and, God knows, he, dear angel, deserves to be the highest in everything.*"† But her misgivings were justified, there was a great deal of unfriendly criticism, and the Levées were very poorly attended.

The Queen's third child Alice was born on April 25, 1843, and she thought it would be a friendly act to ask Uncle Ernest, King of Hanover, to be a godfather. There were risks, for who knew how the Ogre would behave ? The Prince was nervous about it : the King had called him "a paper Royal Highness," and had refused to yield precedence to him on his marriage with the Queen, and Albert did not look forward to the visit of "Ernestus the Pious," as he witheringly termed him in allusion to a remote ancestor, with much pleasure. The King began badly : he arrived for the christening of Princess Alice at Buckingham Palace in a

* Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 451-470.

† *Ibid.*, I, i, pp. 471-473.

four-wheeler after the christening and the lunch that followed were over, and was annoyed they had not waited for him. "But," so the Queen wrote, "he was very gracious for *him*," and the children, Pussie and Bertie were not afraid of him. The graciousness did not extend to Albert. The King asked him to come for a walk about the streets, but when Albert suggested that the crowds that would follow them would be an embarrassment, he said "I used to be much more unpopular than you, but I used to walk about with perfect impunity." *

Worse things yet happened when the King attended the marriage of his niece, Princess Augusta of Cambridge, to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. He had a purpose in being in time for that, for as the Royal procession moved up towards the altar, he pushed the paper Royal Highness aside, and took his place next the Queen. That was more than any Angel could stand, and Albert, stung to the quick "was forced to give him a strong punch, and drive him down a few steps," and the Master of the Ceremonies then led him out of the chapel. So Ernestus the Pious waited in the vestry for the signing of the Register, and an unedifying species of "Hunt the Register" on the lines of "Hunt the Slipper" took place. He put his fist on the book so that he could sign immediately after the Queen and before Albert. So the Queen dodged round the table and the book was passed over to her, and Albert signed before the King could get round. But soon after he got served out for his bad manners for, as Albert wrote to his brother, "Happily he fell over some stones at Kew, and damaged some ribs." † Exit the Ogre, bandaged, from English shores for ever. Out in Hanover he was proving a very good King: probably it was his settled conviction

* Jerrold, *The Court of Queen Victoria*, p. 345.

† Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, p. 123.

that he was also the rightful King of England that made him behave so inelegantly here.

This summer the Queen for the first time left her native shores, and on the new yacht, inevitably named the *Victoria and Albert* and built and commissioned at the expense of the nation, she and her husband paid a visit to Louis Philippe King of France and father-in-law of Uncle Leopold at the Château d'Eu. Since the accession of George III no English Sovereign had set foot on foreign soil, except when George IV, unable to resist the pomp of a second Coronation at Hanover, had traversed foreign states *en route* to his own, and the question arose of appointing a Regent in her absence. The Crown lawyers, however, decided that the Constitution did not demand it.* They were probably wrong, but there would have been objections raised if the old Duke of Cambridge, now senior member of the Royal Family resident in England had been nominated and there was really no one else. The precedent was useful to the Queen, when, in later years, she took her annual holiday abroad.

THE visit was supposedly one of mere friendliness, for the Queen firmly believed that good relations between countries were strengthened by cordialities between their Sovereigns, but political conversations were in view also, for Lord Aberdeen, Foreign Minister, accompanied the Queen and Guizot was with the French King. These conversations concerned the marriage of Queen Isabella of Spain: she was now thirteen years old and before very long the choice of a husband for her, as four years ago for Queen Victoria, would arise. As usual the House of Coburg had an eligible Prince to offer, Leopold, son of Ferdinand and younger brother of Ferdinand, Prince Consort of Portugal. Both the Queen

* Lee, *Life of Queen Victoria*, p. 151.

and Albert supported him, and a few weeks before, in anticipation of this visit, Albert had written to Lord Aberdeen agreeing that "this combination has some advantages which hardly any other could offer." * France, however, did not at all want a Coburg snapping up yet another Queen, and Louis Philippe slightly (but only slightly) changing the subject, proposed a family alliance of his own, namely that his younger son, the Duc de Montpensier should marry Isabella's sister the Infanta Fernanda. But that did not suit the English conversationalists, for should anything happen to Isabella, Fernanda with a French husband would succeed her as Queen. A compromise was arrived at, and it was agreed, though with no formal treaty, that Prince Leopold should not be the English candidate for the Queen on the condition that Montpensier should not marry Fernanda, until the Queen had married some other non-Coburg Prince and had issue : thus the future Consort of the Queens (whether Isabella or Fernanda) would be neither of Coburg nor of Orleans. That seemed satisfactory, and the English party much enjoyed their five days' visit—there were fêtes and a review and the King had thoughtfully ordered quantities of cheese and bottled beer to suit their English tastes.†

But after they had gone the King and Guizot exchanged meaning glances, for they had a scheme, as yet far from ripe, which would astonish those young innocents. The King noticed also that the Queen, speaking as Sovereign, often said "We" not "I," and he was sure that she was neither using the monarchical plural nor coupling her Foreign Secretary with herself. He had promised to return this pleasant visit next year, and evidently Prince Albert must be made much of.

* Letters, 1st Series, i, p. 486.

† Lee, Queen Victoria, p. 152.

The *Victoria and Albert* crossed the Channel to Brighton where the young family were occupying the Pavilion. Pussie was "amazingly advanced in intellect, but alas also in naughtiness," Bertie was much *embelli*, Alice (called Fatima because of her plumpness) was enormous and flourishing.* The parents left again to stay with Uncle Leopold, who was delighted with the success of their visit to his father-in-law; personal contact, he was sure, would banish from Victoria's mind any idea that the King was "an astute and scheming man."† That was a mistake, the King's genial vivacity had produced exactly the effect he intended. For the rest of the autumn they paid visits in England. Prince Albert received the degree of Litt. D. at Cambridge, and the Queen saw with pleasure the enthusiasm with which the "rising generation" received him, but that was not to be wondered at, for she had noted before that "Albert always *fascinates* people wherever he goes by his very modest and unostentatious and dignified ways."‡ They stayed at Chatsworth, where the sight of the colossal conservatory, built by Mr. Joseph Paxton, made a great impression on the Prince—would it be possible to build even a larger glass-house than that?—and to the Duke of Rutland's. Albert went out hunting with the Belvoir pack, and at last, at last, thought the Queen, some of these stupid people would see how truly English he was, for he rode admirably. "How well Albert's hunting answered!" she wrote to Uncle Leopold. It produced a sensation: the press all over the country made mention of it. They thought more highly of his seat on a horse than of his splendid speech to the manufacturers at Birmingham. Very absurd of them, no doubt, but she was tremendously pleased.§

* Letters, 1st Series, i, pp. 493-495.

† *Ibid.*, p. 492.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 376.

§ *Ibid.*, pp. 509, 510.

WHETHER the Queen really believed that Albert exercised this universal fascination is doubtful, for she alludes to the various manifestations of it with just such emphatic utterance as M. Coué recommended to his patients in order that their health might daily improve in consequence of their firm assertion that it was improving. Or perhaps she was so radically convinced of his perfections that she could scarcely conceive of others not recognising them. Who could help being warmed and gladdened by that brilliant sun? Basking in it herself, she thought that all her people must be basking in it, too, and what lustre her home life shed! "They say that no Sovereign was ever loved more than I am," she wrote, "and *this* because of our happy domestic home, and the good example it presents."* Sometimes her happiness so overwhelmed her that nothing else appeared of any consequence, and after a week of holiday at Claremont away from all cares of State, she wrote to Uncle Leopold: "God knows *how willingly* I would *always* live with my beloved Albert and his children in the quiet and retirement of private life." That was an utterly sincere and delightful sentiment, but was it a true one? Being Queen of England was as much part of her identity as being Albert's wife.

But it was no wonder that she adored him, for he was surely a young man of great gifts and of infinite variety. His character was noble and kind, his morals were beyond reproach: the frailties of his mother, the promiscuous gallantries of his father seemed by some unaccountable alchemy of heredity to have passionately reversed themselves in the person of this inflexible Galahad. He had attained this stainless purity, so his brother had told the Queen, not because the temptations of the flesh did not appeal to him, but because his struggle against them was "supported by

* Letters, I, ii, p. 27.

the incomparable superiority and firmness of his character."* He had a passion for knowledge, and an unwearied industry in its pursuit : he had a passion for music, and was never happier than when he was improvising on his organ. He composed : he wrote a *Jubilate*, a *Sanctus*, a *Chorale*, many songs to his brother's words and a *Te Deum* which was performed at the Jubilee service in Westminster Abbey in 1887 : and though it would be absurd to claim for it any high degree of inspiration, how many amateurs are there who have the technical knowledge to compose a *Te Deum* which a choir could sing and which sounded precisely as it was meant to ? He had a genuine love and knowledge of Art, and though it has been the fashion to estimate his taste by the posthumous flamboyance of the Albert Memorial, or by his decorations at Osborne and Balmoral, it must be remembered that he was one of the first folk in England to appreciate and to purchase Italian primitives. But, with these strong artistic tastes, so far from being a dreamer he was a young man of extremely practical mind : his sense of finance and his business qualities, as he was presently to prove, were those of one who had had a commercial education and was fit to be the manager of some new large undertaking and to make it pay. As father of the Prince of Wales he administered from the boy's birth the estates of the Duchy of Cornwall. They consisted not only of property there, largely tin-mines, but of land in Lambeth and Kennington, of which the Duke of Cornwall was the lord of the Manor. Here philanthropy entered : he vastly improved the conditions of life for the tenants, building them dwelling flats with the hitherto unheard-of luxury of bathrooms, but, whereas in 1841 these estates were only bringing in £16,000 a year, by the time the Prince of Wales came of age in 1859 on his eighteenth

* Early Years, p. 261.

birthday the annual income from them was £60,000, and a capital sum of £600,000 had been put by, out of which the Sandringham estate was purchased. Such results are not achieved except by those who have some innate sense as to the handling of money and the management of property. In the realm of politics, so lately *verboten* to him by his wife, he shewed an instinct, discreet and wary and wise, and already she, jealous as she had lately been of any interference of her beloved in this domain, was, as she now worked with him day by day, feeling after the conclusion that loomed dimly ahead: "We women are not fit to govern." More and more she trusted to him; he was stepping on to the very throne of England not by any encroachment of his own, but because she insisted on his sharing it with her. Long before his death, it might be said that she sat on his knee. It was strange perhaps that a man of his undoubted intelligence should not have found it fantastic or wearisome to be so continually reminded that he was little if anything lower than the Angels, that he did not tell her how silly she was about him. Instead he breathed deeply of that "good, thick, stupefying incense-smoke" rather in the manner of a wooed and worshipped woman in whom her lover, as is meet, finds every perfection of mind and body. Her incense did not make him vain, still less conceited: he was only encouraged to persevere even more strenuously to be worthy of it.

In spite of his integrity and his conscientiousness (or was it because of them?) there was a very hard side to his character. He was pitiless to those whom he regarded as falling below the right standards, though willing to forgive them, if, when he had pointed out their errors, they made amends. His father was a trial. He had the acquisitiveness that was so characteristic of King Leopold, and he wrote to his son Ernest suggesting that the Queen or Albert ought

to give him an allowance. She had married Ernest's brother and she ought to do something for her poor relations. Ernest sent this letter to his brother, but Albert was adamant. "Always money and always money," he replied, when he returned it. "The principles (Papa) reveals in it really sting one to the heart." It was not indeed a very unreasonable request: Albert himself had an income of more thousands than poor Ernest had hundreds. Then Ernest himself, once Albert's second self, the parting from whom had caused such bitter anguish, came up against this flint-like quality. He had got into trouble, there had been some scandalous affair, and his adventures had threatened to ruin his health. Albert was pitiless, and in an incredible letter to him he said that "though he would never curse him or take away the love he owed him as a brother," he proposed "to leave him to perish in immorality." He revoked the invitation he had sent him to pay a visit to England. "Nothing would be more disagreeable at present than your visit, or any visit in general . . . the political views you would be expected to have might harm me. . ." As regards the scandal, he strongly recommended him "to marry a virtuous wife." That would put him right in the eyes of the world,* and that a "virtuous wife" should sacrifice herself to a childless marriage for the sake of Ernest's reputation did not seem to matter. The two would be husband and wife, and the past would be blotted out. Ernest took this advice, married Princess Alexandrina of Baden, and the prodigal brother, respectable once more, spent his honeymoon at Claremont.

THEN for a while, happily very brief, the Queen's domestic felicity was shattered. Duke Ernest, her father-in-law, died suddenly in January 1844, and though she had

* Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, pp. 100-101.

only come into touch with him for two short periods, once when he came to England with his sons in 1836, and for the second time at her wedding, she wrote to Uncle Leopold of the crushing, the overwhelming blow. He had been a father to her "his like we shall *not see again*:" and she added a strange reflection for a blissfully happy wife, which was to prove vitally true hereafter: "Indeed one loves to *cling* to one's grief." All this was quite sincere, for he was Albert's father and though Albert had not seen him for four years, and in that interval had found him extremely trying, filial piety, the thought of the old home and the days of boyhood rendered it right to be broken-hearted. But for the Queen there was a further reason, not less sincere, for an even more poignant anguish. Albert felt it would comfort him to go to Coburg, where he could be of use to his brother, and she could not go with him, imposing a Sovereign's presence in the house of mourning. She had said after her marriage that a parting between her and Albert "*will and shall never happen*, for I would go with him even if he was to go to the *North Pole*,"* and though he was not going to the North Pole, he was going to Coburg, and she would be left alone. Could Aunt Louise and Uncle Leopold come to stay with her, and help her to bear the intolerable? . . . "I have never been separated from him," she wrote, "even for *one night*, and the *thought of such* a separation is quite dreadful . . . still, I feel I could bear it—I have made up my mind to it, as the very *thought* of going has been a comfort to my poor Angel and will be of such use at Coburg. Still, if I were to remain *quite* alone, I do not think I *could* bear it quietly . . . I may be indiscreet, but you must think of *what* the separation from my *all and all*, even only for a fortnight will be to me!

* Letters, I, i, p. 262.

We feel some *years* older since these days of mourning."*

So Uncle Leopold and Aunt Louise hastened over to England, and Victoria was parted from her husband for the first time. He quite appreciated what his absence meant to her, and wrote with encouraging consolation before embarking at Dover; "Poor child! You will while I write be getting ready for luncheon, and you will find a place vacant, where I sat yesterday. . . You are even now half a day nearer to seeing me again: by the time you get this you will be a whole one—thirteen more and I am again within your arms" . . . "Fortify yourself with the thought of my speedy return" . . . But what a joy it was for the *treue Coburger* to be at home again after four years' absence! "How lovely and friendly," he wrote, "is this dear old country, how glad I should be to have my little wife beside me, that I might share my pleasures with her"; and he sent her pressed flowers, gathered at Rosenau where he was born.† Assuredly he was very fond of her: he recognised that their union was of "heart and soul and therefore noble," but we miss somehow the craving of the lover for the beloved. Or did he suppress that, lest her heart should be wrung by his suffering? If so, his knowledge of women was most elementary, for nothing would have given her a more ecstatic anguish than to know how desolate was his loneliness. So she ticked off the days of his absence, and, as he impersonally noted, there was "great Joy," when he got back to Windsor.

TSAR Nicholas I of Russia proposed himself for a visit to England this summer. The Queen considered it a great compliment and was rather snobbish about it. She "found

* Letters, 1st Series, ii, pp. 6-7.

† Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, p. 129.

it like a dream to breakfast and walk out with *this* greatest of all earthly Potentates as quietly as if we walked etc. with Charles or anyone." He had an uncivilised mind, she thought, he was sadly lacking in education and was quite insensible to the Arts, but he was very easy to get on with, and the children were not shy of him. He was extremely polite, he said of Windsor "*C'est digne de vous, Madame,*" and he had an eye for a pretty woman, which reminded her of Uncle's little ways. Best of all he was full of praise for her Angel: Albert had "*l'air si noble et si bon,*" and the Queen hoped that he would repeat these gratifying remarks abroad, for, coming from him, they would have great weight. There were most friendly political talks, he wanted to be on good terms with England "*but not to the exclusion of others.*" The French were clearly indicated: and the Queen hoped they would not take this visit amiss, and endanger those cordial conversations with Louis Philippe at Château d'Eu, which she still thought had disposed of any cause of dispute over the Spanish marriages. When the King came later in the year he would have, she told Uncle Leopold, a "*truly affectionate reception.*"

These Royal visits, by which the Queen set great store, multiplied. With the Tsar came the King of Saxony: he was no bother at all, for he went out sight-seeing all day and was "*so unassuming.*"* In August came Prince William of Prussia, brother of the reigning King and later Emperor William I of Germany, and in October King Louis Philippe and his son the Duc de Montpensier. The King's dietetic and other requirements, enumerated to the Queen by his daughter Aunt Louise, were somewhat complicated. He must not be allowed to come down to breakfast or he would certainly eat something, which was bad for him the first thing in the morning, but he must have a

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 12-16.

bowl of chicken broth a little later. He must have a hard bed, a horse-hair mattress laid on a plank if possible, and a large table for his papers. An eye must be kept on him for fear of his catching cold, and though he was sending horses to England, he must not be allowed to ride, and if he went to London or Woolwich, as he much wished to do, he must go by train.*

These precautions being duly observed, the visit was most successful. The King was enthusiastically received, he thoroughly enjoyed himself and the Queen's favourable impression of him was intensified. He was very friendly about an awkward *fracas* that there had lately been between the French and English at Tahiti, he expressed his determination to see the Queen every year in the future, and best of all he appreciated "my *dearest* master's" great qualities and talents, treating him as an equal, "calling him 'Mon Frère' and saying that my husband was the same as me, which it is—and 'Le Prince Albert, c'est pour moi le Roi.'"† These Royal visits were very popular in the country: the Queen was being magnificent in her entertainment of the Kings of the earth (and that is what a Queen should be), and the nation, after the monstrous extravagances of her Uncles was pleased to be told that every penny of the expense was borne, without incurring debt, by the Queen's private purse.‡ Albert's admirable economies in the Royal houses were already fruitful. At the same time they were very expensive, and their object was the establishment of cordial relations with foreign countries in the interest of the nation. That ought to be considered.

POLITICALLY there had been one rather alarming moment. Peel had been defeated on the proposal to enlarge the pref-

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 21-23.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 25, 26.

‡ Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 162.

erential tariff for Colonial produce, but a few days later a vote of confidence was passed, and the resignation of the Tory Government which the Queen now dreaded as "a great calamity" was averted. In August, between Royal visits her fourth child Prince Alfred was born, and the family was beginning to grow *nombreuse* in spite of her earlier sentiments on the subject. It was fairly certain now that Ernest, the reigning Duke of Coburg, whose marriage had restored him to favour with Albert, would have no children, and thus, after Ernest's death, Albert's children would succeed to the Dukedom. Bertie, as heir to the English Crown, could not inherit, and the new baby was the immediate heir. Though the infant was an English Prince the spirit of *der treue Coburger* in his father expressed itself emphatically. "The little one," he wrote to his brother, "shall from his youth be taught to love the small dear country to which he belongs *in every respect*, as does his Papa." *

THE Queen longed for some more private and intimate stage for the domestic life which was the chief source of her abounding happiness than Windsor and Buckingham Palace afforded, one that should be "free from all Woods and Forest and other charming Departments who really are the plague of one's life." † As a small girl she had twice stayed with her mother at Norris Castle in the Isle of Wight, near to Osborne Cottage, where Sir John Conroy lived. She liked the place, and in 1843 Sir Robert Peel had been set to make confidential enquiries about buying the Osborne Estate, prudently concealing the name of the prospective purchaser for fear of the price being put up, and early in 1845 she bought some eight hundred acres, including Os-

* Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, p. 137.

† Letters, I, ii, p. 35.

-borne House. It was not nearly big enough for the parents and the growing family and the visiting Ministers, but they entertained the King of Holland there. As Prince William of Orange he had been William IV's candidate in 1836 for the hand of Victoria, and she recorded with some complacency the astonishing change he found between the little Princess, "crushed and kept under," and hardly daring to speak a word, "and the independent and unembarrassed Queen." He had lost all his front teeth, but thought she had grown. . . *

THE new house was at once begun, and Albert exhibited fresh and amazing talents.

"In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree."

He drew the plans for it, subject to the revision of Mr. Thomas Cubitt to whom London owes so much that is solidly residential in the west-end. He visualized the Clock Tower and the Flag Tower and the open colonnade, he laid out the grounds with their two terraces and their miles of winding roads with "blicks" of the sea. Then, sunburnt with landscape-gardening, and flushed with climbing ladders, he turned the full beam of his taste on the internal decorations and furnishings. Osborne was to be home, therefore it must abound in Lares and Penates, family gods and family images ; but it was also the home of the Royal Family of England, therefore it must be all glorious within. So there were alcoves painted Garter-blue, surrounded by borders of sea-shells in plaster and in the alcoves were bronze busts and statues of the Coburg family, and English sculptors, Thorneycroft and Theed and Edgar Boehm were busy

* Letters, I, ii, p. 42.

producing more and yet more of the Albert Marbles, starting with the group of him and the Queen as Edward III and Philippa, and another of the Prince in Roman armour. There was more intimate statuary as well as these public pieces, for the Queen had marble models made of the hands or the feet of her young family. The Prince had a great admiration for fresco : to him it was the noblest form of painting, just as the organ was the noblest instrument of music, for in fresco could be reproduced on a large scale allegorical scenes of sublime and striking import, painted morals and adorned tales, and the eye was fed with beauty and the heart with elevating reflections. So Mr. W. Dyce, R.A. set forth on the walls of the staircase a huge representation of Neptune (surrounded by a hierarchy of nude gods and goddesses), giving the Empire of the Sea to Britannia, and on the walls of the Prince's dressing-room and bathroom the allegorical and allusive scene of the marriage of Hercules and Omphale. There were two chairs hewn out of solid blocks of coal, for mining was the greatest of English industries and, later, there were other chairs of which the legs and framework consisted of the horns of stags which the Prince had shot in the deer forests of Balmoral. Admirable pictures by Winterhalter of the parents and young family frolicking round them multiplied on the walls, and of dogs and deer by Landseer and of Albert returned from shooting and Victoria standing by him admiring the mixed bag of feather and fur laid out on the carpet. There were statuettes of dogs and ponies and favourite Highland gillies, and "porcelain views." This remarkable form of reminiscent art was introduced by Prince Albert from Germany : famous or familiar views were painted below glaze on plates and teapots, glimpses of Rosenau or the Thuringian forest. He adapted this form to domestic memorial pieces, and Eos and the Queen's dogs with their names for identification

lived again in china. Etchings were executed by the Royal pair, and there were stacks of lithographs of the family pictures.* Only one unfortunate incident marred this happy establishment of the new home. There was a herd of fallow-deer on the estate, but these would be very destructive of the gardens, and so the Prince arranged some sort of drive or battue in the worst German style, and they were all shot, the Queen coming out to see the "sport." But the English were hard to please and considered it a disgusting massacre. As, however, Greville seems the sole authority for this, it may well be exaggerated or untrue.†

By the time the estate was bought and the new home furnished, the cost had been not less than £200,000. The Pavilion at Brighton had been sold to the Corporation, which furnished some fraction of the expense, but otherwise every penny of this sum was paid out of the Queen's private purse. There had been many large expenses as well; £70,000 had been spent over the new stables at Windsor and Buckingham Palace, Royalty had been frequently and sumptuously entertained. Once more the Prince had shewn himself a master in the management of money.

* *Private Life of Queen Victoria*, by one of Her Majesty's servants, pp. 195-207. Cust, *King Edward and His Court*, pp. 175-189.

† Greville, *Diary*, Sept. 16, 1845.

CHAPTER IX

BY THE year 1845 not only the Prince's domestic but also his political ascendancy as regards his wife may be considered as established and both remained unchanged till his death. In memoranda of official conferences with Ministers, made either by him or the Queen, the Royal view had become "our view." "We had a Council yesterday :—" "We saw Sir Robert Peel." * In fact "I" would have been almost as appropriate a pronoun as "we."

It is impossible to get a clearer idea of their mutual relations than is contained in a statement the Prince made of them, which, though it actually dates from the year 1850, was true five years before. The occasion which evoked it was the proposal made to the Prince by the Duke of Wellington that he should become Commander-in-Chief of the English army in the Duke's place, with a responsible Chief of the Staff under him. He refused it after consultation with the Queen for the following considerations :

"While a female sovereign has a great many disadvantages in comparison with a King, yet, if she is married, and her husband understands and does his duty, her position, on the other hand, has many compensating advantages, and, in the long run will be found to be even stronger than that of a male sovereign.

"But this requires that the husband should entirely sink his *own individual* existence in that of his wife—that he

* Letters, I, ii, p. 65.

should aim at no power by himself or for himself — should shun all ostentation — assume no separate responsibility before the public — but make his position entirely a part of hers . . . continually and anxiously watch every part of the public business in order to be able to advise and assist her at any moment in any of the multifarious and difficult questions brought before her, sometimes international, sometimes political, or social or personal. As the natural head of her family, superintendent of her household, manager of her private affairs, sole *confidential* adviser in politics, and only assistant in her communications with the Officers of the Government, he is besides the husband of the Queen, the tutor of the Royal children, the private secretary of the Sovereign and her permanent Minister.” Moreover, so his logical mind perceived, if he became an Executive Officer of the Crown, he would receive the Queen’s views through a Secretary of State. Her views were always founded on his, and the Queen would thus be transmitting his views to the Secretary of State, who would in turn transmit them to him.*

Though this statement was the Prince’s, the Queen approved it, and we may therefore take it as being a joint summary of their standing towards each other, and, supplemented by her copious recitals of her husband’s perfections, we can estimate how purely formal was this sinking of himself in her, and how absolute was the physical, mental and spiritual sinking of herself in him : he was as truly King of England as he would have been if she had died in bearing her first child, and the provisions of the Regency Bill had come into effect. Love was her Lord and King, and these years of her married life were years of discipline to her : under the sovereign spell of his moderation she learned to curb her natural impatience and her imperious

* Speeches and Addresses of the Prince Consort, pp. 64 et 59.

judgment, while meantime her superb commonsense was maturing and her experience widening. But her temperament and her character were unaltered, and they emerged, when his hand was removed, the same as they had been before.

Her recognition of his rule was manifested this year in her insistence to Sir Robert Peel that "something must at once be done to place the Prince's position on a constitutionally recognised footing, and to give him a title adequate to that position." She would again have liked him to be made King Consort, but when a question was asked in the House of Commons by Mr. Borthwick as to whether there was any intention of this, Peel denied it, for "intention" was too definite a word. The Queen was "much hurt" at Mr. Borthwick's impertinence, which was aggravated by the wide comments made in the press and the suggestion that there was some notion of raising his income in proportion to the new dignity of his rank. The evident hostility in the country caused the project to be dropped for the present.*

It was all very annoying, and the Queen's annoyance was acutely renewed when, in this summer of 1845 she again went abroad with Albert, for the King of Prussia whom she visited at his castle of Stolzenfels gave precedence over him to the uncle of the Emperor of Austria : even in his own Germany they slighted him. But that was forgotten in the rapture of at last seeing the home of Albert's youth and his birthplace at Rosenau. This was a pilgrimage of love, and Albert warned his brother not to mar it by pompous ceremonies : a few small and early dances would be appreciated but let there be nothing more. The Duchess of Kent was there, and it was pleasant to see dear old Lehzen again.† On the way home, with Lord Aberdeen in attendance as

* Letters, I, ii, p. 34.

† Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 164.

Foreign Minister, they spent a few hours with King Louis Philippe at Château d'Eu, and the conversations of two years ago about the Spanish marriages were resumed : Lord Aberdeen thought them of sufficient importance to send the Prime Minister a *précis* of them. Count de Trapani, son of Francis, King of the Two Sicilies, was now a suitor for the hand of Queen Isabella, and a second was Don Enrique, Duke of Seville, the Queen's first cousin. France and England would accept either of these, and once more Louis Philippe pledged himself that his son Montpensier should not marry the Infanta Fernanda till the Queen was married and had not one child only, but sufficient to make the succession reasonably secure. This was in accordance with the previous conversations, and Lord Aberdeen thought it satisfactory : a French Prince could not become King Consort of Spain.*

In the winter of 1845-1846 a serious political crisis threatened. There had been a wretchedly bad harvest in England, there was famine in Ireland owing to the failure of the potato crop, and Peel believing that the only way to avert disaster was to repeal the Corn Laws, found that his colleagues were not in agreement with him and saw nothing for it but to resign, recommending the Queen to send for Lord John Russell. There was consternation at Osborne : the prospect of losing her Tory Government filled the Queen with a despair as poignant as that with which she had viewed their accession to power on the fall of the Whig Ministry under Melbourne in 1841. And Melbourne could not help her now : his health was broken, he did not agree with the proposed policy,† and his late colleagues no longer regarded him as a possible leader. Then she feared that the Duke of Wellington (not long ago "that old rebel") might resign

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 44-45.

† *Ibid.*, p. 52.

his position as Commander-in-Chief,* and almost worse than anything was the prospect of having Lord Palmerston at the Foreign Office, a post which he had held in two previous Governments. The Royal pair were firmly of opinion that in Foreign affairs the Crown had the predominant voice and indicated its wishes to the Foreign Secretary, while Palmerston was breezily aware that as long as a Foreign Secretary was in Office and that his measures were endorsed by the Cabinet, the Crown had to accept them. What havoc this dictatorial rough-rider might create in the cosy gardens in which the Royal pair had taken tea with the King of France and chatted so pleasantly over Spanish marriages ! Palmerston at the Foreign Office was unthinkable, and the Queen vainly tried to persuade Lord John Russell to give him some less crucial post. As yet the Colonies were not of such imperial importance as they subsequently became : could not Lord Palmerston be put to look after those remote places ? But any direct intervention of hers was averted : Lord Grey refused to serve in Lord John Russell's prospective Cabinet if Palmerston was given the Foreign Office,† and without his support, Lord John declared himself unable to form a Government. So Peel withdrew his resignation, just as Lord Melbourne had done six years ago after the Bedchamber Plot, saving her from the Tories and that dreadful Sir Robert Peel, whom she was then resolved never to send for again : and now she flung herself into the arms of Sir Robert to save her from the Whigs and that dreadful Lord Palmerston. Peel was now the subject of the superlatives she had then showered on Melbourne, and she wrote to Uncle Leopold of "my *extreme* admiration of our worthy Peel, who shows himself a man of unbounded *loyalty, courage, patriotism*

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 55, 56.

† *Ibid.*, p. 50.

and *high-mindedness*, and his conduct to me has been *chivalrous* almost, I might say." Among his colleagues was Mr. W. E. Gladstone who was appointed to the Colonial Office. By accepting this post, he necessarily vacated his seat at Newark, but not seeking re-election had a seat in the Cabinet but not in the House of Commons.*

The respite from the Whigs was but brief. In June 1846 Peel was heavily defeated on the Coercion Bill for Ireland, and Lord John Russell became Prime Minister with Palmerston as his Foreign Secretary. The Queen's forebodings that foreign affairs would instantly go awry were confirmed, for Palmerston had not been in office a month when he wrote an ill-considered and impatient despatch to Mr. Bulwer, the English representative at Madrid, without submitting it to the Queen, complaining of the delay in the choice of Isabella's husband and mentioning three possible suitors of whom Prince Leopold of Coburg was one. In those amicable discussions at Château d'Eu the Queen and Lord Aberdeen had promised not to support Leopold, and this re-introduction of his name gave the French just the opportunity for the *coup* which Louis Philippe had long kept up his sleeve. The English had broken their engagement : *bien*, his part of it therefore not to marry his son Montpensier to the Infanta Fernanda until the Queen had children was no longer binding on him. It was instantly arranged that Isabella should marry her cousin Francesco, Duke of Cadiz (known as Paquita) elder brother of Don Enrique, and that on the same day Montpensier should marry the Infanta Fernanda now aged fourteen.† The inwardness of this arrangement was that Francesco was believed to be impotent, and thus Montpensier would probably become father of future sovereigns of Spain. Queen Isabella, how-

* Letters, I, ii, p. 64.

† *Ibid.*, p. 103.

-ever, defeated this clever move by having five children herself. Possibly Paquita was more of a man than they had thought him, or perhaps there was somebody else.

Queen Victoria, naturally, was furious not so much with Palmerston who in his despatch had not hinted that Prince Leopold had the support of England, but with Louis Philippe who had broken his word. A chatty letter from the Queen of the French, asking for her congratulations on the marriage of her son inflamed it further, and her devoted Sister and Friend received a bleak answer: "Vous pouvez donc aisément comprendre que l'annonce soudaine de ce *double mariage*, ne pouvait nous causer que de la surprise et un bien vif regret." * She was vexed with Palmerston as well: the French mistrusted him, and they would never have acted thus if Lord Aberdeen had been at the Foreign Office.†

So there were no more pleasant interchanges of visits between the French and English Sovereigns as long as Louis Philippe wore his crown. Two years later, however, the storms of revolution swept over Europe, and he was the first to be blown down. Dethroned and for the time destitute he found refuge in England in March 1848 and all was forgiven. He was much to be pitied, thought the Queen, and the more so because his misfortunes were largely his own fault. What a moral! Claremont, the house of his son-in-law became the home of him and his wife for the remainder of their lives. The Queen must have enjoyed some irresistible moments of complacency, when, six weeks after their arrival, the Chartists made their raid on London. Martial law was proclaimed, she and her family with the lately born Princess Louise removed themselves to Osborne, but the great demonstration ended in complete fiasco. The

* Letters, I, ii, p. 101.

† *Ibid.*, p. 105.

Prince's skittle-alley at Buckingham Palace was wrecked, but the Royal Family suffered no other detriment. They managed revolutionary attempts better in England than in France.*

FRESH fields had presented themselves for the Prince's activities, and none was too small for cultivation, and none too large. He noticed, for instance, that many posts in the English church, like Cathedral canonries, were sinecures : would it not be well to fill them up with scholars who were doing research work ? At his instigation the Queen wrote to the Prime Minister calling his attention to the claims of Mr. Cureton who had translated the Epistle of St. Ignatius from the Syriac, and was about to translate the Gospel of St. Matthew from the original Coptic.† A large field adjoined that, and in pursuance of the promotion of education the Prince in 1847 stood for the Chancellorship of Cambridge University. It shocked the Queen that, if he was willing to accept it, there should be any other candidate, but Lord Powis had the disloyalty to oppose him and was well punished by being heavily defeated. The Queen went up to Cambridge to see Albert confer honorary degrees on distinguished people, and he read an address of welcome to her and after dinner they walked through the courts of Trinity in a state of high romance. Then he set to work to examine the educational curriculum of the ancient University, for he never allowed any office that he held to be a sinecure to him, and found it to be deplorably narrow. Classics and mathematics seemed the only subjects taught there : it was a place of darkness rather than enlightenment, and not a patch on the Universities of his Fatherland. Within a year's time he had worked out a scheme for com-

* Letters, I, ii, p. 170.

† *Ibid.*, p. 121.

prehensive reform, introducing into his programme such subjects as chemistry, psychology, and modern languages, and the place of darkness received it with great cordiality.

Education, enlightenment. . . These to the Prince's mind, which in its conceptions was idealistic and in its methods Teutonically logical, were the panaceas for all the warring disquietudes of the world, and his imagination reached out to far vaster parishes. He saw that with all this revolutionary yeast bubbling abroad, and with his impetuous Foreign Secretary ready to knead the perilous loaf at home, the peace of Europe might at any time be endangered, and that the surest way of averting a cataclysm was to prove to the unquiet nations that the prosperity of each was wrapped up with the industrial prosperity of others. The world's progress was an indivisible unit and it was for England to demonstrate that. There must be a monster Exhibition in London, at which should be displayed all the products of the civilised world, and thus the nations would see that in the lucrative arts of peace rather than in the destructive panoply of war lay their moral and material salvation. To use his own definition, which precisely stated what he had in view: "The Exhibition of 1851 is to give us a true test and a living picture of the point of development at which the whole of mankind has arrived in this great task of applied science and a new starting-point from which all nations will be able to direct their further exertions." * Though his detached mind left out of consideration the factor of human passion (for when two nations are on the verge of a quarrel they will not pause to think whether, by pressing it, their supplies of butter or bedsteads from abroad will be cut off), his idea was admirable, and he was the initiator of the great exhibitions which ever since have

* Speeches and Addresses of the Prince Consort, p. 112.

proved so strong an incentive to industrial progress and the expansion of trade.

The Prince outlined his scheme to a few members of the Society of Arts, and on their approval devoted to it all his amazing powers of organization. The first step was to get hold of English manufacturers and captains of industries : they would surely see that such an Exhibition would give them a prodigious advertisement for their goods, and that while it promoted the cause of world-amity it would also be the shareholders' friend. At a dinner at the Mansion House he addressed eighty-two Mayors of provincial towns in industrial districts and thus secured the municipal support of local centres. But England was only the foundation of the structure he proposed to raise : to realise his design all foreign nations must join hands in this comradeship of progressive and interdependent industry. Greenland's icy mountains must send bear-skins, and India's coral strand pearls and elephant-tusks, and China its porcelain and Spain its tapestries and Switzerland its chocolate and cuckoo-clocks. Distinguished Ambassadors must attend officially ; Buckingham Palace would welcome the Royalties, and local hosts would entertain other representatives : Liverpool would show them the new Albert Dock, and Cardiff its coal-mines and Staffordshire its potteries. All looked very promising.

But the bright dream of this cosmopolitan temple of industries where all nations would worship grew dark. The year 1848 had seen thrones totter and heard the blare of revolutionary trumpets, and the foreign potentates who were bidden to the celebration were apprehensive that this august assembly would provide the foes of Kings with an unrivalled opportunity for a *battue*. Then the bright dream became nightmare, for a storm of opposition sprang up in England itself. It was largely directed against the Prince

personally and an organized attack was launched in the press and in Parliament. Funds were short : it was argued that a mob of Continental revolutionists would be let loose on London, and Albert, almost despairing, wrote to his brother to say that he expected that he would have to give it up. But still he worked on, the Queen was behind him, and so were the industrial centres. The tide turned, money came in, Parliament sanctioned the site which had been chosen in Hyde Park, and Albert unrolled again the sheaves of architectural designs for the building. One particularly took his fancy, for he remembered going to Chatsworth some years ago and being immensely struck by the gigantic conservatory built there by Mr. Joseph Paxton. Both the Queen and he thought it "out and out the finest thing imaginable of its kind" : it was 300 feet long and 64 feet high, so that the tropical trees within did not nearly reach the roof ; * and now Mr. Paxton had sent in a design on the same lines but of far vaster scale, a conservatory a thousand feet long, all of glass, like the New Jerusalem, erected on frames and girders of iron painted bright blue, and so high that it would be unnecessary to clear the site of the few trees that stood there. Mr. Paxton's design was accepted. Within such an edifice there would be room for all the assembled inventions of progressive civilization, and as soon as the Crystal Palace was ready they poured into it : masses of machinery and oil-yielding palms, stuffed elephants with immense ivory tusks, locomotives, stamps for crushing ores, the pit head of a coal mine, Persian carpets and Kidderminster rugs, porcelain and wax flowers and glass paper weights and bedsteads and blankets — it must suffice to say that nothing was omitted which could serve to draw the nations together by the bonds of industry and applied science. The pacific influence of the Arts was represented also : a vast

* Letters, I, i, p. 509.

organ, that noblest of musical instruments, was built in the concert hall, there was a picture-gallery, there were stained glass windows for sacred art, and for profane an Olympus of the casts of Greek statues and of Egyptian bas-reliefs, and Mr. Tennyson the new poet-laureate, though fallaciously assigning the glory of the completed scheme to the Queen, summed up, in an address to her, the conception and the fulfilment of Prince Albert's dream :

"She brought a vast design to pass
When Europe and the scattered ends
Of our fierce world did meet as friends
And brethren in her halls of glass." *

The Exhibition was opened on May 1, 1851. The Prince and Princess of Prussia and their son Frederick, then aged twenty, braved the risk of assassination, and for the first time the young man set eyes on that lively intelligent girl of ten who spoke German as fluently as English, and who, seven years hence, was to bring Coburg blood into the House of Prussia. As for the Exhibition itself, the ravens who croaked disaster and discouragement were dumb, for from the day of its opening till it closed in October it was a seething mass of enchanted visitors ; while as for the Queen, she was even as the Queen of Sheba, bewildered and "quite beaten" with the beauty and the vastness of it. "A fairy scene : the *greatest* day in our history. Many cried and all felt touched and impressed with devotional feelings. It was the *happiest, proudest* day in my life." She had indeed the right to feel like that, for it was Albert's own conception, and he had triumphantly carried it through by two years of incessant work in the face of innumerable difficulties.† Day after day she visited it in the early morning,

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 222.

† Letters, I, ii, pp. 317, 318.

and every visit confirmed her enthusiasm. The financial results exceeded all expectations : £200,000 had been guaranteed, but the guarantors were not called upon to put down a penny : instead, a profit of £186,000 was realized, or 93% over and above the sum guaranteed. Indeed the Prince had the Midas touch, and, when all was settled up, the Commissioners, on his recommendation, bought thirty acres of land round about the present Exhibition Road in Kensington for £50,000. Those who are curious in such matters may compute from the value of freeholds there to-day, what the appreciation of that purchase has been. That site, too, was to serve the cause of education, and on it now stand a score of museums and establishments for the furtherance of Arts and Sciences, and the great Hall built in memory of him from whom the whole idea sprang.

The Queen's love for her husband and her admiration for his character could scarcely rise higher, but this really immense achievement enhanced her sense of his gifts to the depreciation of her own. Both in politics and business he showed "such perspicacity, such *courage*." "We women," she wrote to her Uncle Leopold, "are not *made* for governing — and if we are good women we must *dislike* these masculine occupations." She had to reiterate that, and again she wrote that, though she was interested in European politics, "I am every day more convinced that *we women* if we are to be good women, *feminine* and *amiable* and *domestic* are not fitted to reign." A strange *volte face*: as a young girl with Melbourne by her side she had shouldered the duties of Sovereignty without a qualm of misgiving : now, with Albert by her side, and fourteen years of experience behind her, she announced her virtual abdication. As for him, he had become "such a *terrible* man of business" that she wondered whether these preoccupations took a little off from the gentleness of his char-

acter. . . * But nothing really marred her sense of his perfection and that profound and loving conviction made it impossible for her to imagine that others could see him differently. In reality this Exhibition which she thought had immortalized him had not extinguished the ill-will of those who had put so many obstacles in his way. It was impossible to deny his immense ability and his gift for organization, but these are not qualities that endear. He remained, just as before, a foreigner, and, as such, not to be trusted and potentially dangerous. In himself, he was certainly a very happy man : he had attained an influence over his wife in the matter of politics such as he had never dreamed of, and politics had become for him a passion. He was conscious of having attained the ambitions he had written about to his stepmother before his marriage, of having used his powers and endeavours for promoting the good of many : he had a wife to whom he was truly attached, and to whom their twelve years of marriage had been a honeymoon : he had a family of growing children : he had every opportunity for the gratification of his artistic tastes. As for popularity he genuinely despised it.

After the creation of his Exhibition, Albert was soon busy again creating a new home. Two entrancing visits to Scotland had determined the Queen to have a house in the Highlands and in 1848 she had taken a lease of Balmoral, a small Scotch Castle on Deeside. It was inconveniently small for the growing family and the Household and the Ministers in attendance ; the latter had only a billiard-room as a joint sitting-room, but the Queen revelled in its remoteness and privacy. Albert had admitted that deer-stalking was the most interesting of pursuits, and the Queen went out with him, and after the excitement was over, good Grant or Macdonald made tea in some sheltered nook, and

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 362, 367.

the kettle wouldn't boil, and John Brown told her she would be wise to put on her waterproof. They picnicked, they stayed in remote bothies and played dummy whist after dinner; they made incognito tours through wild districts staying in primitive inns and eating tough chickens with no potatoes. They made friends with the charming gillies who accompanied them, and Albert had lessons in Gaelic: "a very difficult language for it is pronounced in a totally different way from that in which it is written." When not out with Albert on the hill, the Queen visited the houses of the crofters and took them flannel petticoats, and made small purchases in village shops.* In other words they lived like a conscientious homely couple on holiday at their country estate, looking after their tenants as good landlords should. Even Greville who never lost an opportunity to disparage and ridicule them could spy no target for his acidities when in 1849 he was summoned to Balmoral for a Council and found only a charming simplicity and ease "as of gentlefolk." The Queen was busy all day with her duties and her errands, and after dinner she and the Prince went back to the cleared dining-room and had a dancing lesson in Scotch reels, while the Prime Minister and he played billiards.† Here the Prince laid aside all his dignity and stiffness, he made puns, he roared with laughter if somebody tripped over a rumpled hearth-rug: the witty Lord Granville, used to say that he never told his best stories, when pretending to pinch your finger in the door was so much more effective.‡

But the house had soon been found not spacious enough even for this refreshing and simple existence, and after four years the Queen bought the estate, and Albert, with the

* Leaves, *passim*.

† Greville, Diaries, Sept. 15, 1849.

‡ Mary Ponsonby, p. 5.

architectural experience of Osborne behind him, made his plans for something more Schloss-like, built of granite, and in 1855 the new Castle was habitable. Inside, in recognition of the Queen's Scotch ancestry, tartans flowered on the walls and the carpets and the furniture, Balmoral tartan, and Victoria tartan and Royal Stuart tartan. Family busts and statues accumulated, the walls grew spiky with the trophies of the Prince's stalking and the neighbouring hills with the cairns that commemorated important events. To the Queen, as the towers soared and the tartans and the gardens blossomed Balmoral became far more than a refuge from the fierce light and the cares of State, where she could enjoy the domestic felicity for which, as she had once told Uncle Leopold, she would be fain to have done with Sovereignty. It became a symbol of its creator, who was the core of her happiness, and when the "poor old house" had vanished, and the new Castle with its towers and pinnacles and its gilt sculptured coats of arms gleamed in the late light, she wrote : "Every year my heart becomes more fixed in this dear Paradise, and so much more now, that *all* has become my dear Albert's *own* creation, own work, own building, own laying out, as at Osborne, and his great taste and the impress of his dear hand have been stamped everywhere." *

* Leaves, p. III.

CHAPTER X

LORD PALMERSTON'S injudicious despatch on the subject of the Spanish marriages in 1846 was the first of a series of highly frictional incidents. Several times within a year of his appointment as Foreign Secretary the Queen reminded him that he had failed to show her the drafts of instructions to her Ministers abroad before they were sent off : she desired that it should not occur again,* and it soon did. He sometimes used language which she thought bitter and unfriendly and unworthy of the "calm dignity" which should characterize the dealings of the British Government with foreign nations,† and she feared that some day "he might give her name to sanction proceedings which she may afterwards be compelled to disavow."‡ It was only reasonable and proper that the Queen should feel strongly about this : she, as Sovereign, was Britannia and the Government were her servants. She must know therefore what orders they were giving in her name : she must have time to consider the wisdom of them, and when she had endorsed them it was a monstrous insincerity that her servants should modify them in any way. But, as the friction increased, she made a claim on behalf of the Crown which was quite unconstitutional, asserting her right of dismissing at will any such insincere servant. She was free

* Letters, I, ii, p. 122.

† *Ibid.*, p. 199.

‡ Lee, Queen Victoria, p. 214.

to use all possible personal pressure, but summary dismissal would be the act of an autocrat.*

Palmerston, on the other hand, took the line that he, as Foreign Minister, was responsible for the relations of England with other countries : the Queen, however reluctantly, had entrusted him with that duty, and, subject to his views being approved by the Cabinet, he meant to direct them as he chose. He (with his colleagues) was liable to be dismissed if his policy was condemned by the Houses of Parliament, but as long as he — with his colleagues — commanded the confidence of the country, he could not be sent away like a housemaid who had displeased the mistress or rather the master of Buckingham Palace. In this point he was constitutionally right, though he was just as undoubtedly wrong in not getting the Queen's sanction to act in her name, without ascertaining her views, or, having ascertained them, in modifying them without further reference to her. He could also countercharge the Queen with irregular practices. He ascertained that she had received through the German Ambassador in London a letter from the King of Prussia which he was told to deliver to her privately and directly. It dealt not with personal affairs but with the policy of England towards the unification of Germany under Prussia, a scheme which had the strong sympathy of both her and the Prince : and the Queen having acquainted herself with its contents ought of course to have passed it on to her Foreign Minister. Palmerston therefore insisted on reading the letter and dictating a non-committal answer which she must send.† That was a frightful humiliation, and brought into the antagonism a personal element which embittered both parties. In a conference, for instance, between the Queen, Lord John Russell and the

* Letters, I, ii, p. 264.

† Lee, *Queen Victoria*, pp. 212, 213.

Prince about the possibility of removing Palmerston from the Foreign Office the Queen said that she distrusted him not only on matters of policy, but "on personal grounds also." The Prince intervened: he suggested that she had not meant what she had just stated, and under that compelling glance she corrected it and withdrew "personal."* But never had she meant anything more sincerely. Her personal objection to him was of the very strongest, for, unlike Melbourne, unlike Peel and Aberdeen, he had no respect for the Prince's opinions and no patience with his careful, his logical, his admirably reasoned and, it must be added, his interminable memoranda. "To me," the Prince once said to the Queen, "a long closely connected train of reasoning is like a beautiful strain of music. You can scarcely imagine my delight."† But, equally, he could not imagine Palmerston's impatience with these beautiful strains of music. Palmerston despised the Prince's reasoned and logical reviews as applied to the cut and thrust of international politics as thoroughly as the Prince was appalled at the Foreign Secretary's summary methods of handling crises. Crises, he said, were liable to arise suddenly and must be dealt with summarily: there was no time for symphonies. Neither of them, though extremely able men, could see the merits of the other's technique. To Palmerston, the Prince's mind was a fit instrument only for an editor of St. Ignatius's epistles: Palmerston's mind, thought the Prince, was that of a gambler at the poker-table, where bluff was a valuable weapon. Neither did justice to the other, for some crises are best solved by such reasoning as gave the Prince symphonic pleasure, others by a poker face. Palmerston, moreover, seemed to enjoy perilous positions; it added savour to his cigar to smoke it in a powder-magazine.

* Letters, I, ii, p. 236.

† Speeches and Addresses of the Prince Consort, p. 41.

To the Queen any criticism of her husband's views was now almost of the nature of blasphemy. She looked upon him as wisdom incarnate, and in all questions from the decorations at Osborne to the unification of Germany she identified herself with him. He was the Crown. But Palmerston often did worse than criticize him : he ignored him. He disagreed with all the Prince's views on international politics, such as the unification of Germany, and the claims of Denmark to the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, and he did not bother his head to discuss them with him. Once when he spent a day with the Prince out stalking, the latter was hopeful that the Foreign Secretary was impressed by his solid reasoning on some such topic. But he was wrong : Palmerston let him have it his own way because it was not worth while to argue with the man. He really might be called an atheist. Nor had he the slightest reverence, as might have been expected, for the House of Coburg. The Queen of Portugal had married Ferdinand of Coburg, first cousin both of Albert and Victoria, and when in 1847 the throne was threatened by revolution, Victoria, appealed to by her Sister Sovereign, consulted her Foreign Secretary as to what could be done. But he regarded it as "Coburg family affair," and all the advice he could give was that the Queen of Portugal should dismiss her Coburg adviser, Dietz, whom he considered the source of the trouble. Neither thrones nor Coburgs were sacred in his eyes,* and his favourite pastime seemed to be to make Royal flesh creep. An *enfant terrible* with his pockets full of explosive squibs.

For five years Palmerston, when he was not ignoring the Prince, carried on this desultory sparring-match. He feinted, he ducked, he dodged and never could the Royal couple plant a damaging blow or win a single round. The

* Letters, I, ii, p. 134. Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 211, 212.

Prince's nerves had been sorely strained by all the worries and anxieties connected with his Exhibition, and though the summer of 1851 had seen his project crowned with success, it was no wonder that the Queen felt her heart *bien gros* at the prospect of leaving her beloved and peaceful Balmoral in the autumn,* and plunging again into these constant disturbances. Her apprehensions were instantly justified: hardly had they got back to Windsor when Palmerston devised fresh embarrassments over the arrival in England of Kossuth, the Hungarian revolutionist. He made up his mind to receive him, and the most agitated correspondence took place between the Queen and Lord John Russell. She hoped the Prime Minister would try to prevent it, for it would make a very bad impression abroad, and it must at any rate be understood that Palmerston received him not officially but only privately. Lord John went further: he could not separate the private man from the public, and whether the Foreign Minister received the revolutionist at Downing Street or at his private residence it would be equally objectionable. He asked him not to see Kossuth at all, and Palmerston (playing poker) replied "I do not choose to be dictated to as to whom I may or may not receive in my private home. . . You will of course use your discretion as to the composition of your Government." Then the Queen took Lord John's advice, and owing to some very violent speeches which Kossuth had made since his arrival forbade Palmerston to receive him: and Lord John summoned the Cabinet to consider the situation, for Palmerston's letter to him had obviously threatened resignation. The Cabinet met, and Palmerston yielded to their unanimous opinion, threw in his cards, and promised that he would not receive Kossuth. But it is more than likely that he had already done so, for ultra-Radical meetings sent

* Letters, I, ii, p. 275.

votes of thanks to him for his "courteous attentions" to Kossuth, and the Queen told Lord John that she had "*every reason to believe* that he has seen him after all." *

With the Queen in a frenzy of irritation at Palmerston's bland disregard of her orders, with Palmerston, tongue in cheek, minutely consulting her about her wishes concerning Court mourning for the death of Uncle Ernest, King of Hanover, as if to divert the attention of a child from what really mattered,† the Prime Minister's position was frankly intolerable. He knew far better than the Queen, who still stuck to her pathetic fallacy that Albert was now "*looked up to and beloved as I could wish* he should be,"‡ how enormous was Palmerston's, not the Prince's popularity in the country, and that any Government which quarrelled with him risked its existence. He knew, too (though he could never tell her that), that the Prince, in spite of the success of his Exhibition, was now, more than ever, regarded as a foreigner, who, by virtue of his domination of her, was reckoned a far greater danger to the country than any antics of her Foreign Minister. Indeed Palmerston's unpopularity with the Crown might be considered an inverse barometrical reading of his general popularity: the stormier the presage of the weather in one respect, the more settled was the weather in the other. Lord John, though suffering sharply himself from Palmerston's contumacy did all he could to reconcile the irreconcilables: he wrote soft answers to the sarcastic and censorious notes the Queen volleyed at him as if he had been guilty of Palmerston's "wilful indiscretions," but never an atom of her wrath did he turn away. He pointed out that Palmerston had served as Foreign Secretary under Lord Grey in 1830 for four years, and

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 324-331.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 321, 332.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 240.

under Lord Melbourne in 1835 for six years and now under himself for five years and that the country generally had approved his policy abroad. Occasionally a European monarch had resented his dealings, but he had retained "the good will and the affection of the people of England, a great security in those times." A Minister with such a record must be allowed a little latitude.* But all his efforts were in vain : icy replies evidently drafted by the Prince were the rejoinder.

There came a brief respite from Palmerston's squibs and pin-pricks. On December 2, 1851, Prince Louis Napoleon, President of the French Republic, brought off his military *coup d'état* in Paris. Both the Queen and the Cabinet highly disapproved of such bloodshed and violence, and Palmerston was instructed to write to Lord Normanby, British Ambassador in Paris, that England was maintaining a strict neutrality. But on his own account he expressed to Count Walewski, French Ambassador in London, his "entire approbation of the act of the President." † Count Walewski communicated this to his Government, and thus England was in the awkward position of having simultaneously expressed her approval and of having declared neutrality. Lord John therefore asked Palmerston for explanations, and since they were quite unsatisfactory, he dismissed him from his post of Foreign Secretary, the Cabinet concurring.

To the Queen and the Prince this came as a complete and delightful surprise, ‡ and needless to say the Prime Minister incurred no reproof for taking so unconstitutional a step without the consent of the Crown. He had done what they had hopelessly failed to do for years, and their joy bubbled over. The Queen wrote to Uncle Leopold announc-

* Letters, I, ii, p. 330.

† *Ibid.*, p. 334.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 344.

ing the glad tidings (it was Christmas) which would give satisfaction "to the *whole* of the world." She chortled : " 'The veteran statesman,' as the newspapers, to *our* great amusement, and I am sure to *his* infinite annoyance, call him, must rest upon his laurels." * Albert, in an exultation of mixed metaphors, wrote to brother Ernest that the man who had embittered their whole lives had cut his own throat, and since he had been given enough rope had hanged himself.† Having committed this double suicide surely he must be dead !

But he was never more alive, nor less resting on his laurels : there were many more to be added. Two months later he brought about the defeat of the Government in the House of Commons ; Lord John Russell resigned, and the Queen called upon Lord Derby to form a Ministry. The only historical interest about its transitory life was that Disraeli took office as Chancellor of the Exchequer. Hitherto he had been in the Queen's blackest books for the bitter suavity of his attacks on the late Sir Robert Peel. But now she began to feel differently about him. She found his financial statements very clear and able and his reports on Parliamentary business were really amusing : he wrote to her of a debate "languishing with successive relays of mediocrity, until it yielded its last gasp in the arms of Mr. Slaney."‡ This was quite a new style, and he was a new kind of statesman, with his rococo manner and his Oriental flamboyance. But his tenure of office was short : the July elections declared against the Government and in the winter they were defeated over Disraeli's budget. Lord Aberdeen then undertook to form a Coalition Government of Whigs, Peelites and Liberals, but he could not do without

* Letters, I, ii, pp. 344, 352.

† Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 225, 226.

‡ Letters, I, ii, p. 391.

Palmerston who re-entered the Cabinet as Home Secretary within a year of the time when the Queen and the Prince had rejoiced over his extinction. Gladstone succeeded Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer: his first Budget speeches roused so much enthusiasm (though Income Tax remained at the high rate of sevenpence in the pound for incomes over £150) that the Prince hoped that his Christian humility would not allow him to become dangerously elated.*

Meantime the very indiscretion of expressing sympathy with Louis Napoleon's *coup d'état*, for which Palmerston had been dismissed, was beginning to justify itself. The aloof neutrality on which the Queen had insisted, backed by Albert's stern disapproval of the President's morals, was likely to become more dangerous than the indiscretion itself. There had been a solemn *Te Deum* at Paris in January for the success of the new Government at which the Corps Diplomatique was to be present, and the Queen expressed her wish that Lord Normanby should not attend it for the thoroughly vindictive reason that if he did, Palmerston could say that, though his approval of the *coup d'état* had caused him to lose his post at the Foreign Office, the Queen's Ambassador only a week later "had been ordered publicly to thank God for its success." † Most awkward! But soon her common sense told her that it would be trifling with the peace of Europe if England did not establish cordial relations with France, and she wrote to Uncle Leopold that she intended to keep on the best terms with the President: she never had felt any personal hostility to him, and his firm hand had pulled France out of the mire. ‡ Uncle agreed, for Belgium was perilously placed:

* Letters, I, ii, p. 446.

† *Ibid.*, p. 355.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 360.

he compared himself to a traveller in the tropics who finds a snake in his bed, "and must *not move, because that irritates* the creature." * Good relations with England would soothe the creature, and render him less likely to bite Belgium. So the Queen's brother-in-law Duke Ernest who was in England during the autumn was directed to pay his respects to the President on his way home for fear that if he omitted to do so, the irritable creature would think the Queen had told him not to ; and when he assumed the title of Emperor she wrote most cordially to "Sir, my Brother" and assured his Imperial Majesty of her invariable attachment and esteem.

Napoleon warmly reciprocated these advances, and made a proposal of marriage to Princess Adelaide of Hohenlohe, daughter of the Queen's half-sister Feodore, in order to ally himself though rather distantly, with the Royal House of England. The Queen did not like that, nor did the young lady's mother, nor indeed the young lady herself,† and it was perhaps rather a relief when the Emperor met the peerless Eugénie de Montijo, and instantly fell in love with her and married her. He made one more attempt to procure a family match in the persons of his cousin Prince Jerome and the Queen's first cousin Princess Mary of Cambridge, but that most attractive young lady was so definite that nothing more was heard of the matter.‡

* Letters, I, ii, p. 378.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 402, 407, 429.

‡ Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 237, 238.

CHAPTER XI

THE Duke of Wellington's death in September 1852 had left the post of Commander-in-Chief vacant. Prince Albert told the Prime Minister, Lord Derby, that the Duke had expressed the wish that he should take it, but his reasons against doing so still held good, and Lord Hardinge was appointed. Lord Derby must have been relieved at this decision for assuredly there would have been furious opposition to the Prince's appointment, the more so because there were disturbances at hand which were presently to develop into war.

The trouble began, like most troubles during the next eighty years, in Eastern Europe. In the spring of 1853 Holy Russia felt herself obliged to take up the cause of her fellow Christians in Turkey. This became a favourite gambit of Russia's when she wanted to annex desirable pieces of Turkey and by the autumn it had the intended result of causing Turkey to declare war on her. The Powers could not possibly stand by and watch this duel, for Turkey would be quite unable to resist the Russian armies, and before hostilities broke out, the British Mediterranean fleet was sent to the Bosphorus, but with orders not to enter the Black Sea unless Russia invaded Turkish territory.* On the Continent Napoleon III was eager to form an alliance with England and join her against Russia, but Lord Aberdeen was only doing his duty in wanting to explore every possible

* Letters, I, ii, p. 453.

means of maintaining peace. His Cabinet was divided : Palmerston (and once again he was right) was convinced that war was inevitable, and by way of protest against the dilatoriness of his colleagues resigned his seat in the Cabinet, his pretext being that he differed from them on the Electoral Reform Bill which was under discussion in internal politics. The country generally was eager for war, and no doubt he calculated that his resignation would inflame the war-fever. But still the Government would not move, and a tempest of calumny burst over the heads of the Queen and the Prince. She was held to be his tool, and he in turn to be the tool of the Tsar. He was a foreigner, he was conspiring against the true interests of England, and perhaps above all his long continued hostility to Palmerston told against him. Alas for the Queen's pathetic belief that she was more beloved than any Sovereign had ever been by reason of the purity of her domestic life, and that the country shared her conviction of her husband's wisdom and perspicacity and courage ! His pro-German proclivities had long been resented, so also his position with regard to the Crown. Though the respectable journals took no part in the virulence of these personal attacks on him, the gutter-press abounded in incredibly scurrilous abuse, and tens of thousands of the Queen's devoted subjects believed that they would both be arrested for high treason against the realm.

The Cabinet meantime, coming round to Palmerston's conclusion that war was inevitable, much regretted the Home Secretary's resignation, for Palmerston unattached was a political menace, and Palmerston attached was worth tens of thousands of votes. They opened communications with him, and the result was that before the end of the year, he withdrew his resignation, once more proving himself indispensable as a supporter of this curiously mongrel and

indecisive Cabinet. This helped to silence the insane allegations against the Prince, which, though utterly ludicrous, were deemed by the Prime Minister to be serious enough to be officially noticed in Parliament, and in both Houses the leaders of the Government and of the Opposition united in condemning them.* Before the end of February 1854 all negotiations with Russia broke down, and war was declared on her jointly by England and France.

This period of procrastination, accompanied by the popular frenzy against the Prince, must have been extremely trying for the Queen. She shewed great discretion during it, and it is interesting to observe that instead of exulting over Palmerston's resignation, as she had done before, she confessed that it made her very anxious.† Probably she also now believed that war was inevitable and realized the value of his insistence. When once war was declared she backed her Ministers up by every personal effort in her power. Quite early in her reign, when reviewing her Guards, she had declared that she longed to lead her soldiers against her country's foes, and that essential valour was hers still : but since her presence at the head of her army in the Crimea would have been even more embarrassing than that of her *bon frère* the Emperor of the French, who threatened to do the same, she devoted herself to activities at home. She saw her troops off at daybreak : she embarked on her yacht and literally led out her fleet for the Baltic from Spithead : she offered her yacht as a transport for troops : she demanded to know, from the harassed Duke of Newcastle the exact effective numbers of muskets, Artillery, Infantry and Cavalry, militia, seamen and ammunition available in England for purposes of defence : she remonstrated with Lord Aberdeen because he deprecated the violent

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 243. Letters, I, ii, pp. 452-461.

† *Ibid.*, p. 468.

attacks in the English press on Russian perfidy and the character of the Tsar. Russia was an enemy, and it did not become her Prime Minister to be "impartial": this was not the time for impartiality, and she rejoiced to learn that any subject of hers who invested in the French loan to Russia could be held guilty of high treason. Her spirit was exactly that of her predecessor Queen Elizabeth, who, like her, always did her best to avoid war, but when forced to it, became Bellona incarnate. She would not hear of a "*day of humiliation*" being liturgically observed, for probably allusion would be made "*to the great sinfulness of the nation, which brought about the war.*" Sheer hypocrisy! It was the sinfulness and ambition of the Tsar which were to blame. Have a day of prayer by all means, thanking God for the great prosperity of her people, and asking the help of the Almighty, but the thought of a day of humiliation was repulsive. She was equally firm and uncompromising with the King of Prussia, whom she considered vacillating and cowardly in not acting up to his avowed principles and joining the English and French to resist Russia's attack on Turkey, and she told him so in a letter in which candour was but flimsily cloaked in the most ragged garment of tact.*

As for the lately distrusted Emperor Napoleon III she cultivated the friendliest relations with him. At the cost of bitter though brief bereavement she insisted on Albert's paying a four days' visit to him in his military camp at St. Omer, and the Emperor's gratifying appreciation of his "*qualités si séduisantes et de connaissances si profondes*" extinguished the last smoulderings of her distrust, and she invited him and the Empress to stay with her at Windsor the following spring.†

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 20-37.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

Throughout 1854 the war overshadowed all other interests : "We are," she wrote to Uncle Leopold, "and indeed the whole country is, *entirely* engrossed with one idea, one *anxious* thought—the *Crimea*." The victories at the Alma in September, and at Balaklava and Inkerman in the next two months were matters for rejoicing, but the end of the war could not be within sight till Sebastopol fell. A false report of that reached Balmoral in the autumn and a great bonfire was built to be lit when it was confirmed, but no confirmation came and for a year it remained unlit. Winter came on, and it became known how abjectly deficient were the commissariat departments, and how lamentable the state of the hospital at Scutari, into which Miss Florence Nightingale was now beginning to introduce the first elements of hygiene and nursing.

The outcry against this monstrous incompetence led to the resignation of Lord Aberdeen early in 1855, and for a while politics intruded themselves, for a most disconcerting contingency had to be faced. In vain the Queen tried to get round it ; she sent for Lord Derby, but he could not find support. She took counsel with the aged Lord Lansdowne, she sent for Lord John Russell whom, in spite of his recent defection from the Government, she asked to form a Ministry : she even expressed her wish that Lord Palmerston should hold office in it. Combination after combination was suggested, but all was of no avail. There was only one man in the country who could keep a Ministry together, and finally she sent for Palmerston. He accepted with alacrity, and within a week's time of his forming his Government, he paid a visit to the Emperor Napoleon at Paris, and blithely told the Queen that they intended to correspond. There was consternation at Windsor : "How," asked Albert in a perturbed Memorandum, "can the Foreign Secretary and Ambassador at Paris, the legitimate organ of

communication, carry on their business if everything has been previously preconcerted between the Emperor and the English Prime Minister ?” * But as usual, Palmerston took no notice of these perturbations.

THE Emperor and Empress paid their state visit to Windsor in the spring of 1855. They had a great popular reception as they passed through London, and he pointed out to her the modest house in King Street where he had lived when England was his place of refuge ; to-day Windsor received the exile on his Imperial return with the highest honours. A banquet in St. George’s Hall, a review of the Guards, a State Ball, a Gala performance at the Opera, a Council of War, attended by the Emperor and the Prince, the Investiture of the Emperor with the Garter, a Guildhall lunch, and, inevitably, a visit to Albert’s Crystal Palace now gleaming on Sydenham Hill were among the items of a fatiguing but most cordial programme. As for the Emperor he inspired the Queen with an uneasy fascination : it was impossible not to feel warmly to a man who had said that the irreproachable domestic felicity of his hostess had raised the tone of the Courts of Europe, and that Albert was a Prince among Princes, but had the Emperor, she asked herself (or Albert asked her) “a strong *moral* sense of right and *wrong* ?” He believed in his “Star,” in the Destiny God had imposed on him, which must be ruthlessly followed. And how picturesque it was that the granddaughter of George III should be dancing a quadrille with the nephew of England’s arch-enemy, Napoleon I, in the Waterloo Room ! She found the Empress Eugénie then in the height of her amazing beauty “very pretty and very uncommon-looking,” which was a sound judgment.†

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 105–106.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 117–126. Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 254.

The Emperor was very eager to cement these cordial relations, and in August the Queen and Prince Albert with their two eldest children returned the visit. Paris greeted them with the utmost enthusiasm : every day they were received with such ovations as had scarcely been accorded to Napoleon I returning from his foreign campaigns. She had never been in Paris before (nor indeed had any English Sovereign since Henry VI), and she was "*delighted, enchanted, amused and interested.*" Words failed her : their entry was quite *feenhaft* and *overpowering*, and she could but feebly express her emotions when she wrote to Uncle Leopold that "all old enmities and rivalries were *wiped out* over the tomb of Napoleon I, by whose coffin I stood (by torchlight) at the arm of Napoleon III now my nearest and dearest ally." Previous qualms as to his character vanished : she felt he had become a real friend, owing to "his *own personal qualities.*" There was no-one to whom she felt more inclined to talk unreservedly, or in whom she would be more inclined to confide . . . "he *has* the power of *attaching* those to him who come near him which is *quite incredible.*" Albert, she allowed, was less enthusiastic, but the Emperor's feelings were "very reciprocal." The Empress was kind and good, but they saw little of her, "as for *really* and *certainly very* good reasons she must take great care of herself. . ." *

The fascination of the Emperor and the Queen's conviction that the Anglo-French alliance was "completely sealed," was too optimistic : she revised her opinion before long and before long she reversed it. Far more significant for the destinies of Europe was the impression made on her thirteen-year-old son. Bertie was fascinated too : he wore his Stuart kilt, he knelt at the tomb of Napoleon, he took part in these great fêtes, Paris thought his manners charm-

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 135-140.

ing, and to Paris he lost his heart. The childish impression was never effaced : he was already a little *boulevardier* with bare knees, and when the horrid moment came after ten blissful days to get back to his lessons and his tutors he begged the Empress to let him and his sister stay on for a little : Papa and Mamma had plenty of children at home, and they would not mind. There was also present at some of these fêtes a big moustached German. He was in Paris again fifteen years later, but the palace of St. Cloud where the Queen was now so royally lodged was habitable no more, for the German artillery of his King had shelled it and the ruins still smoked.

The new Castle at Balmoral was occupied for the first time this year (1855). It was Albert's creation and all, within and without, was perfection. The bonfire built in a hurry last year on the false report of the fall of Sebastopol had been upset by a November gale on the day of the victory at Inkerman, which to the Queen's keen eye for coincidence was very strange, and seemed (that was strange, too) "to wait for our return to be lit." It all came true, nor had it long to wait, for three days after her arrival in September came the authentic news and after dinner Albert with all the Household and staff climbed the hill, built it again and fired it. Dancing Highlanders surrounded it, whisky flowed, pipers played, and there was general ecstasy.

Fresh domestic excitement followed, for the Queen had purposefully bidden to Balmoral young Prince Frederick William of Prussia. He had already seen the little English Princess Royal at the great Exhibition, and now, though she was not yet fifteen, he asked the Queen's consent to propose to her. His parents approved, his uncle the King of Prussia approved, and the young lady's parents approved very much indeed, for he was a most admirable young man, and Vicky

would have an excellent husband : also both the Queen and Prince Albert cherished the idea of the unification of Germany of which their daughter would one day be Queen, and the House of Coburg would be again enlarged by the acquisition of yet another crown. In view of the maiden's extreme youth she was not to know anything about it till after she was confirmed next spring, when she would be fifteen. But as her suitor was allowed to give her a sprig of white heather for luck, "and make an allusion to his hopes and wishes," she may conceivably have guessed. Both the Queen and the Prince took it for granted that she would accept him, for her father wrote to Lord Clarendon, in his best memorandum style, that Prince Frederick would then "receive from her own lips the answer which is only valuable when flowing from those of the person chiefly concerned."* Unfortunately too many people had been admitted into the secret : it speedily became public property, and within a week of the white heather incident it was spoken of in the press. English opinion was unfavourable, for once again the German sympathies of the Queen and her husband were exhibited. The Hohenzollerns were defined by the *Times* as "a paltry German Dynasty," but it was not many years before that family found opportunity to silence such an aspersion.†

In the autumn Victor Emmanuel, King of Sardinia, paid a visit to Windsor where he received the Garter, but vainly tried to enlist the Queen's sympathy for the unification of Italy under his rule. Probably the fact that Palmerston favoured it predisposed her against it, and the personal impression she formed of her Royal brother may have caused a little coldness, for he was of wild appearance and uncouth

* Leaves, p. 107. Letters, I, iii, pp. 146, 147.

† Lec, Queen Victoria, p. 261.

manners, and more like a mediaeval Knight than any King she knew. He talked to her of the fine physique of his illegitimate children, which was odd conversation to make to a lady, but she remembered he went out very little into Society (*Was there Society in Sardinia ?*) and did not know its usages.*

By now the end of the war was in sight, and the Queen was very busy over the honours to be bestowed in connection with it. There were to be medals to be distributed personally to her returning soldiers, not officers alone but privates, to reward their gallant deeds, and she loved the thought that "the rough hand of the brave and honest private came for the first time in contact with that of their Sovereign and their Queen."† For those of conspicuous valour, officers and privates alike, she instituted the Victoria Cross, which as a Decoration she ranked above all that she could confer. There were details to be settled about it, in which we may certainly trace the precise mind of Albert. She thought the motto "For Valour" was better than "For the Brave" as the latter would lead to the inference "that only those are deemed brave who have got the Victoria Cross." There was a similar worry about the initial letters to follow the name of the recipient: "V. C. would not do. K. G. means a *Knight* of the Garter, C. B. a *Companion* of the Bath, M. P. a *Member* of Parliament, M. D. a *Doctor* of Medicine, etc. etc. in all cases designating a person. No-one could be called a Victoria Cross. V. C. moreover means Vice Chancellor at present, D. V. C. (decorated with the Victoria Cross) or B. V. C. (Bearer of the Victoria Cross) might do."‡ To the admirable Miss Nightingale, the Queen sent an autograph letter and a brooch bearing her

* Letters, I, iii, p. 156.

† *Ibid.*, p. 161.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 235.

crown and cypher and a St. George's Cross in red enamel with the inscription "Crimea. Blessed are the Merciful." *

On March 30, 1856 the Peace of Paris was signed at the Tuileries. Far the most important provision in it was the neutralization of the Black Sea, which prohibited any ship of war of whatever nation traversing its waters. This cut off all effective sea-board from Russia except her Arctic and Baltic ports, and, as it thus precluded her from becoming a sea Power, was bound to lead to trouble. Further honours followed the conclusion of peace. Palmerston received the Garter (even the Queen acknowledged he deserved it) and then she turned her mind to the conferring of an honour she felt more amply earned than any and long overdue. In a substantial and strangely tortuous Memorandum she put her case for the conferring on her husband and on "all future Consorts of Queens" the title of Prince Consort and precedence by law next the Queen. His position at present was anomalous and most derogatory to him and her alike and liable to give rise to distressing domestic disturbances : for if her children should be disagreeable, "the Queen will have her husband pushed away from her side by her children, and they will take precedence over the man whom she is bound to obey !" Abroad similar bitter humiliations were liable to occur. Right-minded Foreign Sovereigns called him "Brother" but others only "Cousin" and before now he had had to yield precedence to an Archduke : she and he in fact were "The Queen and her foreign husband the Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha. . ." This Memorandum, to which, very wisely, was appended the assurance that no further grant was contemplated, the Queen circulated to Lord Palmerston and Lord Derby, and the Lord Chancellor drafted a Bill to remedy this "strange anomaly." Lord Derby with great tact but evident trepida-

* Letters, I, iii, p. 170.

tion pointed out that the Session was now far advanced and that important measures (as if this was not important!) were already being postponed owing to lack of time. He thought that if "The Prince Consort Bill" were brought before the House of Commons in its present nasty temper it might be postponed and criticized in a very painful manner. The Queen took this very sensible advice, and gave up all idea of making his new title the subject of a vote in Parliament. She could manage it another way.*

Then there was the post of Commander-in-Chief to be filled. The Duke of Wellington in 1850 had wanted Prince Albert to succeed him, but he had refused, and on the Duke's death Field-Marshal, Viscount Hardinge had been appointed. This summer (1856) he had a paralytic stroke and resigned. It would never do to suggest the Prince again, for no Government could possibly have carried through so unpopular an appointment. But the Queen during the war had become amazingly military. The Army was Her army, she had touched the rough hands of privates, and felt as if her soldiers were her own children.† She remembered with pride that her father had been a soldier, and a Field-Marshal, and she thought it would be an excellent thing to confer the post on a member of the Family. Happily her cousin George, now Duke of Cambridge, was a very suitable nominee. He had held command in the Crimea, he had been a member of the Council of War at Paris, and she wrote to Palmerston that "he was almost without a competitor."‡ The Cabinet agreed and the Duke was sworn in. He held his distinguished Office for thirty-nine years, resisting with the dead weight of his unprogressive mind all attempts to introduce reforms in the Army or a

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 192-197.

† *Ibid.*, p. 127.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

Parliamentary control such as administered the affairs of the Navy through the Lords of the Admiralty. The Queen's personal influence had secured his appointment, and that personal influence had to be exerted again with singular firmness to effect his retirement.

With the shadowing anxiety of the war removed, all the Queen's early gaiety shone forth again. She had always loved dancing, and though now growing stout and the mother of eight children she became almost *débutante* again with the *début* of her eldest daughter. Prince Albert always hated late hours but many a time this summer he must have sat up till dawn brightened over Westminster. She could only waltz, as Lord Melbourne had agreed, with Royal partners, but she had a passion for English country dances, the steps and manoeuvres of which she disinterred from ancient Terpsichorean manuals, and after rehearsals with her ladies and gentlemen she introduced these on the floor of the new ball-room at Buckingham Palace. There was a ball at the Embassy of her Turkish ally, and she chose the Ambassador as her partner (what would the Prophet have said ?) and remembering all the private practice in the dining-room at old Balmoral, she danced Scotch reels to the skirling of bagpipes in the Waterloo room.* And though Albert might yawn, she had a sympathetic reveller in her enchanting cousin Princess Mary of Cambridge who was unequalled for delicious geniality and power of enjoyment. Another suitor was after her this year, the Queen's Royal Brother and Yahoo, the King of Sardinia, who had seen her the year before at Windsor, and now finding himself a widower, applied for her hand. But with great good sense she instantly declined : she was a Protestant and deeply attached to her religion, and he was a Catholic. She would never consent to alter her religion, and however much free-

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 267.

dom he allowed her, she would be in a false position. The Queen cordially agreed : Uncle Leopold, it is true, had become a Catholic, and so had Ferdinand Coburg in order to marry the Queen of Portugal, but if Cousin Mary felt like that she was right to refuse : the Royal Family of England ought never to give up their Protestant faith for any Catholic crown.* The House of Coburg, however, made a marriage contract next year, which resulted in another Crown, and that an Imperial one, for Princess Charlotte, daughter of Uncle Leopold married the Archduke Maximilian of Austria, whom Napoleon created Emperor of Mexico. Tragic was the end thereof.

In the autumn the Queen's half-brother Charles, Prince of Leiningen died, and once again there emerge in a letter to her Uncle signs of that strange morbidity of mind, that deliberate cherishing of the sense of bereavement which in a few years was to grow to monstrous proportions. Her health, she said, was excellent : "grief never seems to affect it. . . And I *derive* benefit and *relief* both in my body and soul in *dwelling* on the sad object which is the *one* which fills my heart. The having to think and talk of other and indifferent things is very trying to my nerves and does me harm."†

In the spring of 1857 a Vote of Censure was passed in the House of Commons on Palmerston's Government for his wise and firm handling of an embroilment in China, but the Queen, owing to the difficulty of constructing any stable Government out of the heterogeneous elements in the Opposition, actually begged him not to resign. She preferred "*any other alternative*" to that. She was expecting another baby in a month's time and declared she could not face the anxieties of a Ministerial crisis.‡

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 206-208.

† *Ibid.*, p. 218.

‡ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

The Queen's youngest child Princess Beatrice was born in April and the tale was complete. The new baby was only a month old when the betrothal of the eldest to Prince Frederick of Prussia was announced. The engagement was far from popular in England, and with all these horrid Radicals in the House of Commons, the Queen was a little nervous as to how the House would welcome a request that they should vote a suitable dowry for the wife of the future King of Prussia.* She wanted to make a precedent, according to the custom in the time of her prolific grandfather, George III, for the House to vote suitable settlements on all her children as they came of age or married, but her nervousness was intelligible, for the nation might think that she was sufficiently well off to provide for her offspring herself. Since her accession twenty years ago, the income from the Duchy of Lancaster had greatly increased, and out of it she had already bought — thanks to Albert's excellent economies — two nice estates, one of 2000 acres in the Isle of Wight, the other of 25,000 acres at Balmoral, and on each she had built and furnished expensive houses, and had paid for the numerous visits of Royal Personages out of her own purse. Moreover five years ago, in 1852, she had personally come into a pleasant little fortune. An eccentric old miser, John Camden Neild, whose father had been silver-smith to the Prince Regent, left her £500,000. Luckily he seemed to be without any relations, at least none were discovered, and the Queen had accepted it rather than let it be swept into the coffers of the State, though providing for Mr. Neild's servants, and putting up a window to him in his parish church, but this did not make a very serious inroad on the capital. Uncle Leopold was delighted with her good luck, and with a touch of envy told her that such gratifying tokens of affection towards Royalty

* Lec, *Queen Victoria*, p. 271.

were only now to be met with in England, though they used once to be shewn on the continent : he thought that this half million of money would make a very necessary provision for his niece's family.* So the Queen, instead of endowing some public institution with the Neild Bequest, had carefully kept it intact, and now when occasion came for providing for the eldest of her children there was no harm in seeing whether Parliament would do it for her, and enable her to keep this nest-egg for future emergencies. Parliament was in a good humour, and made a vote of £40,000 and an annuity of £8000. Mr. Neild's bequest therefore could continue to increase at compound interest.

AND now it was time to remedy that long-standing anomaly that caused her such humiliation, and she created her husband Prince Consort, with rank next to her own. It was wise as Lord Derby had pointed out not to run any risks, so instead of presenting a Bill on the subject to her Houses of Parliament, she made use of Royal Letters Patent which none could challenge. The public press was not sympathetic : it wondered whether the nation would be asked for a fresh grant in order that he might suitably maintain the new dignity, but the Queen, very wisely, had no such intention. Oddly enough, the recipient of this honour did not much appreciate it. He wrote a rather bitter letter to his brother Ernest saying that he ought to have been made Prince Consort at his marriage seventeen years before, instead of which "the Tories cut off my appanage in the House of Commons and my Parliamentary rank in the House of Lords, and the Royal Family was against the new-comer."† There in one point his memory erred, for he had never sought a seat in the House of Lords, agreeing

* Letters, I, ii, p. 392.

† Bolitho, *Albert the Good*, p. 245.

with the Queen that political influence on her would thus be attributed to him, but it was true that the Queen might have done in 1840 that which she had put off for seventeen years. All these years he had toiled and slaved, a foreign husband, and though his political wisdom had been recognised by many of her Ministers, he was foreign still, dis-trusted by the people whom he had so unweariedly served. The honour, such as it was, had come too late, and even now it was no national recognition of his devotion to the country.

He turned to his innumerable despatches and memoranda again. Work, as always, from the time he refused to leave his studies at Bonn for a Christmas holiday at Coburg, was a necessity to him, and now every line the Queen wrote to her Ministers was framed on his advice or transcribed from his draft. There was trouble in India, which seemed to him very serious, and even Lord Palmerston who for far too long had pooh-poohed the notion of its being grave, was thinking differently. What haphazard feckless folk were the English ! Six months ago Albert had warned them of the inadequacy of their reserves both in men and material, and now India was wanting both, and there were scarcely enough in England for home-defence if any emergency arose. Indeed, when the Crimean war was over, the troops had been reduced, in spite of his warnings, and now they were thinking of reducing the garrison at Malta, which would be very dangerous, to meet the needs in the Far East. The Empire was growing like a lusty boy in his teens, and he had still to wear his outgrown clothes.* There had been mutiny and massacre at Cawnpore, and Lucknow was being besieged by the rebels, and Delhi was in their hands. More Militia must be embodied, there must be more Cavalry, more Guards ; the steps hitherto taken by the Government were quite inadequate to meet the crisis abroad and to

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 212-234, 236.

make it clear to the Continent that England was not defenceless at home. Victoria must give her Ministers no rest till they saw how criminal was the paltriness of their measures. They had learned nothing of what the Crimean war should have taught them : it was tempting Providence to behave in this happy-go-lucky way. Even she did not seem to realize the need for urgency, for she was going to Balmoral as usual at the end of August before Parliament rose. That was unwise : she ought to be on the spot where despatches could reach her without the delay of that long journey, and there would be sure to be criticism in the press that she put her picnics and expeditions before her duties. Fresh figures about the recruiting had come in which were very unsatisfactory, and it looked as if the Government was shy of increasing the Army Estimates. He drafted a strong note for her to send to Lord Palmerston.*

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 235-246. *Lec, Queen Victoria*, p. 276.

CHAPTER XII

THE Princess Royal's marriage was fixed for the last week in January 1858. Already there had been a slight misunderstanding about the *venue*, but this the Queen had cleared up with the firmness, which, when occasion demanded, was peculiarly her own. It was the practice that Prussian Princes should be married in Berlin, and the suggestion had been made that this marriage should take place there. In such cases she did not argue with people ; she told them and she told Lord Clarendon, her Foreign Minister : "Whatever may be the usual practice of Prussian Princes, it is not *every* day that one marries the eldest daughter of the Queen of England. The question therefore must be considered as settled and closed." * Closed it was, and, instead, the Princess' future Court came to England for a three weeks' visit, "which," said the Queen, "is a very good thing so that she will get acquainted with them." Seventeen German Royalties were her guests for the festivities that preceded the wedding, and though she and the Prince Consort had set their hearts on the marriage, as linking together the Royal Houses of England and Prussia, the parting was agonising. The Princess and her father were devotedly attached to each other : she was the very reflection of his mind, sharing all his artistic and literary tastes and, in spite of her youth, affording him intellectual companionship to a degree the Queen had never done. No such ties

* Letters, I, iii, p. 253.

bound mother and daughter, and indeed, as long as she had Albert by her, the Queen could not miss even a beloved daughter with a sense of desolation. Like her father, as her life soon proved, the Princess was incapable of naturalizing herself in the country which by blood was almost wholly hers, and to the end she remained an Englishwoman in Germany, even as he was a German in England.

Early in February followed the eighteenth anniversary of the Queen's own marriage, and the quality of her happiness dispersed any gloom of parting. "It has brought," she wrote, "such universal blessings on this country and Europe. For what has not my beloved and perfect Albert done? Raised monarchy to the *highest* pinnacle of *respect*, and rendered it *popular* beyond what it *ever* was in this country!"* That conviction was as luminous to her as ever; it made for her a perpetual light, and indeed, in spite of the hyperbole of personal expression, there was real truth in it. Popular he never could be himself: he had none of the gifts which evoke popularity, but their life together had in those eighteen years erased the memory of the Hanoverian Uncles, and repaired the rickety Throne.

Lord Palmerston's Government fell in February 1858, and the work of reorganization in India after the mutiny, and of bringing it under the sole and direct power of the Crown, fell to Lord Derby's Government. A Secretary of State for India with a seat in the Cabinet was appointed, and a Viceroy, representing the Sovereign, took the place of the Governor General. The suggestion was made that the Queen should assume the title of Empress of India, but it was not proceeded with, until in 1876 it was revived at her suggestion by Disraeli. She was exceedingly tenacious of Royal Prerogatives: she did not like appointments to the Indian Civil Service being based on competitive examina-

* Letters, I, iii, p. 264.

tion : she insisted that the Secretary of State for India should send her all despatches and submit to her all drafts of his replies in the same way as the Foreign Secretary ought to do, but sometimes didn't. . . Then above all it was important that the Proclamation now being drafted, in which she personally addressed these 100,000,000 of her new subjects, who were on an equality with the people of her Empire, "should breathe feelings of generosity, benevolence and religious feeling." * Not a word must be said about the horrors of the past year : they were over and done with, and she would found a new "high order of chivalry," the Star of India, and the first to receive it from the hands of the Viceroy should be the native Princes who had remained loyal.† In all these wise and conciliatory counsels, in the "long view" of their observations, in the considered detail, even as in the anxiety to preserve the prerogatives of the Crown the hand of the Prince Consort is clearly manifest.

Yet it was an irrational, illogical people over whom he vicariously reigned, and his secret sense of their ingratitude brought him into strange sympathy with the man who for years had thwarted and ignored him. Palmerston's late Government, he admitted in a private memorandum, "had been successful in all its policy," but Palmerston himself had become extraordinarily unpopular. The man behind whom the country had stood solid was hooted in the House if he rose to speak, and the mere fact that he advocated any measure was sufficient to make the whole House vote against it. "Without rhyme or reason" (here the bitterness surged up) "he had been stamped the only *English* statesman, the champion of liberty, the man of the people, etc. etc., now, without having changed in any one respect, having still the same virtues and the same faults as he always had, young and

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 294-299.

† Lee, Queen Victoria, pp. 288, 289.

vigorous in his seventy-fifth year, and having succeeded in his policy, is now considered the head of a clique, the man of intrigue, past his work, etc. etc. in fact hated !” * But under the Prince’s sympathy smouldered a sense of the injustice done to himself, and perhaps of envy. Palmerston at seventy-five was young and vigorous : he at thirty-nine was old and tired, and Palmerston cared nothing for the rough seas of unpopularity ; he steered gaily through the breakers that would have swamped anyone else, and never appeared to heed the injustice of not being given credit for all he had done. The Prince’s own bitterness at the ingratitude of this unfriendly nation for whom he had worked so long infused this pathetic outpouring. Yet popularity was like a will o’ the wisp to light one’s way, while the devotion of himself to his duty burned undimmed.

THEN there were disappointments in that domestic life which to the Emperor Napoleon was so fine an example for the Courts of Europe, and was to the Queen her private Empire on which the sun never set. Since the time when the heir to the throne was in the cradle, the education which should most nobly prepare him for his destiny had been his father’s constant preoccupation. The Prince Consort had early defined the general end in view : it was such an upbringing as should render him as unlike as possible to his maternal great uncles, and the Queen stated the same in other terms when she said that her fervent prayer (and everybody else’s) was “to see him resemble his angelic dearest Father in *every every* respect both in body and mind.” At his parents’ instance Stockmar had prepared two vast memoranda on the education of Princes, which in thoroughness left nothing to be desired. Indeed some of the Baron’s precepts came perilously near to the obvious, for he was

* Letters, I, iii, p. 300.

very emphatic that the Prince of Wales must "*unquestionably be trained*" in the creed of the Church of England, as if there were some thought of his being brought up as a Buddhist. He observed that science and philosophy were fraught with anti-Christian speculations, and it was a question whether the young Prince (then aged seven) should think these problems out for himself or be forewarned. That theological point was referred to Bishop Wilberforce of Oxford. The disquieting enigmas of adolescence would presently arise : on those Sir James Clark, the Prince's private physician, who had been concerned in the case of Lady Flora Hastings, would be consulted. But it was time now for systematic mental education to begin, and so at the age of seven a tutor was found for Bertie, the Reverend Henry Birch, who fulfilled Stockmar's requirement of being "morally good, intelligent, well informed and experienced."

The principles on which this system of education was based were totally wrong. The Prince Consort from his earliest years had been a natural student, a boy eager to learn from books and enjoying the study of them. He deduced therefore that since Bertie (*ex hypothesi*) must grow up into his image, he must learn to love books. At present he had no taste for them, and must therefore be rigorously fed with them : appetite, in fact must be induced by overfeeding. Then Bertie developed a boyish *Schwärm* for his tutor, and here indeed was an opportunity : he might possibly have begun to take an interest in his lessons, because Mr. Birch would be pleased. The Prince Consort took another view : he remembered his own affection for Herr Florschütz, a disordered unnatural fancy, and he dismissed Mr. Birch. This was a miserable experience for the boy, who wrote him round-hand notes of lamentation, and left small presents under his pillow. The next tutor frankly told the Prince

that books were being applied too thickly, but so un-German a sentiment was anathema, and two more tutors were engaged.

Bertie was bidden to keep a diary, but any freedom of record was checked because his father would read and criticise. He was bidden to write to Stockmar in "the firm, large and legible hand," which the Baron had laid down as being indispensable for Princes, and tell him what had been arousing his intelligent interest. So Bertie (aged nine) told Stockmar about the waxwork figures of Thugs whom he had seen at Papa's Great Exhibition — surely that would be safe — and how those thrilling folk made a fine art of murder. But Stockmar wrote back that England (over which Bertie would one day rule) was a Christian country, "where such atrocious acts are not even dreamed of." All companionship with boys of his own age was forbidden : at the most, two or three boys from Eton came up to have tea at Windsor, but they were never left alone with him ; his father was always on guard and led the embarrassed conversation into such channels as he would himself have loved at that age. There were walking tours in which, under copious invigilation, other boys were allowed to join : there was a tour abroad, with a sojourn at Bonn, of which the Prince Consort retained such studious and delightful memories, and here invigilation was multiplied, for Stockmar had warned the parents of the danger of contaminating foreign habits, and four invigilants took care of five small boys. But tutors' reports were monotonously discouraging, and Bertie was not nearly so intelligent as his elder sister.

It seems strange that the Queen, remembering her "sad and lonely childhood," should not have protested against so joyless a system, but Albert must know best. The severance from boys of his own age was the worst part of it, for Bertie

was of a most companionable nature, much at ease with others and sociable and well-mannered, yet it never struck her that this natural geniality was an immense asset to a boy who would one day be king. Albert was stiff and aloof, so that was the ideal deportment. When Bertie was sixteen he was allowed to choose his own clothes, but that freedom was limited by a portentous memorandum from his mother, who, remembering how her Uncle, the last Prince of Wales, had taken his seat in the House of Lords in a black velvet coat covered with pink spangles, warned him against "*extravagance or slang*" in his attire, "because it would prove a want of respect and an offence against decency, leading—as it has often done before in others, to what is morally wrong": so there were sermons in coats. He was confirmed, and there his father took charge, and, like him, he was examined for an hour, in the presence of his parents, by the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Dean of Windsor. At the age of sixteen, when ordinary boys would have been at boarding-schools for six years or so, he first left his parents' roof, and was established at the White Lodge in Richmond Park with two tutors and a rota of equerries for his sole companions. These received exhaustive memoranda from the Queen and the Prince Consort as to their duties; and the Prince Consort, perhaps with remorseful memories of the soft cheese he had put in Cousin Linette's pockets and the frogs she had put in his bed, warned them to stamp out any tendency towards practical jokes. On his seventeenth birthday (1858) he was given the Order of the Garter and a fresh joint memorandum reminded him that life was composed of the duties set forth in the Church Catechism. Colonel Bruce was appointed as his Governor, and he must report himself to him whenever he left the house. Under his charge he spent three weeks in Rome, and, with the Governor in attendance, had an audience of

the Pope, for if he went alone, so the Queen wrote to Uncle Leopold, His Holiness might announce that "Bertie had said God knows what." He was kept strictly at his books, and for relaxation visited the ruins of Roman buildings : in the evening eminent folk like Robert Browning and Frederick Leighton came to dinner. His Governor was instructed to take notes of his conversation and send them to his father with news of his mental progress. These reports were not favourable : Bertie attached undue importance to the pleasure of social intercourse, and his diary gave little satisfaction. He was not imbibing a hunger for art or a thirst for history, and the fact that he was the first Prince of Wales who had ever spoken to a Pope roused in him no reflections about the interesting spread of religious toleration.

He was a grievous disappointment, for with all this intensive culture he did not show the faintest promise of ever becoming the least like his father, and the Prince Consort cryptically lamented that he was neither fish nor flesh. He was stupid, he had no desire to learn, his temper was quick instead of blandly philosophical, and that sunny geniality which others found so attractive was only a symptom of a frivolous nature. But never was there any thought of modifying the curriculum of tutors and books and isolation. Bertie came home from Italy in June 1859, and was packed off to Edinburgh University for a couple of months until Oxford reassembled after that monstrous long vacation. Then followed three terms at Oxford, and to prevent contamination of his morals from dissolute undergraduates he lived with his Governor and tutor in a house called Frewin Hall, and the Professors of Chemistry, Modern Languages, Modern History and Ecclesiastical History came there to give him lectures. Smoking was forbidden, memoranda flew to and fro between Windsor and Oxford and the Prince

Consort made surprise raids on the University to see that there was no slackness.

The Dominion of Canada had furnished a regiment in the Crimean war and the Queen had promised that the Prince of Wales should pay a visit there, when he was old enough. So, in the long vacation of 1860 he was allowed to make a tour through the Dominion and also go to Washington and New York. Wherever he went his geniality and personal charm asserted themselves. There had lately been a good deal of friction between the United States and England, and the Duke of Newcastle who accompanied him as Colonial Secretary reported that the ablest diplomacy could not have kindled such friendliness as the dunce had done. His father found it hard to credit such news, and there was certainly irony in his comment to Stockmar: "Bertie is generally pronounced the most perfect product of Nature." General Bruce was not so enthusiastic: he was afraid that the Prince was getting an undue sense of his own importance, which seemed to the Prince Consort much more likely, and so his father reminded him that the warmth of his welcome was entirely due to the fact that he was representing his mother. On his return he was sent straight back to Oxford, immured at Frewin Hall and still forbidden to smoke. After Christmas he was sent under similar limitations to Cambridge.

This strictness and supervision were farcical, they were also lamentable. Possibly the Prince Consort was subconsciously jealous of Bertie's reception, as of a young King, in the Dominion over which he would some day reign and in the United States. What splendour of Empire awaited this indolent unscholarly son of his, who at Oxford and Cambridge was rebelling against the restrictions which to himself would have been a service of perfect freedom: for the Prince Consort had ordained for him a life which at Bertie's age he would have considered an ideal existence. No late

hours, no distractions, no pretty girls, but a bevy, a queue of professors waiting to instruct him, and unlimited opportunities for study ! Yet did his father occasionally have some slight qualms as to the wisdom of this upbringing ? For himself work, incessant work for the public good was his passion and his illumination. But we may imagine him, after receiving some gloomy report from General Bruce, looking up in his orderly file a speech he had made at the opening of a Conference on National Education and there reading :

"Our Heavenly Father in His boundless goodness has made His creatures that they should be happy, and in His wisdom has fitted the means to His ends, giving to all of them different qualities and faculties, in using and developing which they fulfil their destiny, and running their uniform course according to His prescription, they find that happiness which He has intended for them." *

The Prince Consort's own words "giving to all of them their *different* qualities and faculties" must have arrested him. They had been his deliberate and thought-out utterance, but had he put them into practice ?

II

THE peace of Europe was broken in the year 1859 by Austria declaring war on Sardinia. With the help of the Emperor Napoleon, Victor Emmanuel regained the province of Lombardy, and proceeded with his work of the consolidation of Italy. Napoleon took this admirable opportunity of annexing the provinces of Nice and Savoy as a just stipendium for the military aid he had rendered. But he lost the fascination he had once exercised over the Queen, and she began to regard him as less fascinating than dangerous. There had been fears that Prussia might join Austria, and

* Speeches of the Prince Consort, p. 191.

the Queen had urged him to do his utmost to localize the conflict, but he had not paid very much attention, though he warmly thanked his Sister for her advice. But Prussia kept out of it, and there was good news from Berlin, for in January of this year the Princess Frederick gave birth to a son. At home Lord Derby was defeated on the Reform Bill, and Lord Palmerston became Prime Minister for the second time. Was there ever such a man for resilience? Two years ago nobody would listen to his speeches in the House and his advocacy of any measure was a sure sign that it would be defeated, and now once again it was obvious that he was the only man who could keep a Ministry together. Next year, the Queen's second daughter, Princess Alice, was betrothed to Prince Louis of Hesse, which, as strengthening the family ties between England and Germany, was looked upon both by the Queen and the Prince Consort as highly satisfactory : and Disraeli, now leader of the opposition played a very good card for himself in pledging his support to the vote of a dowry of £30,000 and an annuity of £6000 which the Queen proposed to ask Parliament to grant. Her early distrust of him had now quite evaporated in the warmth of his personal loyalty, and besides, he professed the highest appreciation of the Prince Consort's abilities.

The general confusion in Europe, out of which that dangerous Emperor of the French had snatched two provinces, re-arranged itself, though not to the Queen's content, and the year 1861 opened with every prospect of prosperity and domestic happiness. The death of the King of Prussia who had been insane since 1857, could not be considered as anything but a deliverance, and on the accession of his brother Prince William, who had been acting as Regent, Prince Frederick became Crown Prince. There were glad anniversaries to follow, first that of Vicky's wedding-day.

The marriage had been extremely happy : she was devoted to her husband and had not yet begun the Anglicizing Crusade in Germany which led to so much misery. Then came the thrice-blessed twenty-first anniversary of the Queen's own marriage. It filled her heart with gratitude and love : it had brought "to the *world at large* such incalculable blessings," and as regards herself, "*Very few can say with me that their husband at the end of twenty-one years is not only full of the friendship, kindness and affection which a truly happy marriage brings with it, but the same tender love of the very first days of our marriage.*"* There were still some of her Household who had been with her then, and she had a gathering of them that evening, with the six children who were at home. The missing ones were Vicky, who was of course in Germany, Alfred, who had joined the Navy and was with his ship, and Bertie who was keeping his term at Cambridge. It would not do to interrupt his studies even for this occasion.

And then there was his marriage to think about. Three years ago, while he was only sixteen, Uncle Leopold had drawn up a list of seven eligible Princesses of whom six were German (and were currently reported to be very assiduous in learning English). The seventh, fifth on Uncle Leopold's list, was Princess Alexandra, daughter of Prince Christian of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg : his wife Princess Louise of Hesse-Cassel was heiress to the Danish throne. The Prince Consort made enquiries about this young lady from his daughter at Berlin, who gave the most enthusiastic report of her. This carried weight and the Prince promoted her to the top of Uncle Leopold's list. For reasons which would appeal to any very conscientious father, he thought that the sooner Bertie married the better, and it was planned that during that scandalously lengthy

* Letters, I, iii, p. 433.

long vacation at Cambridge, he should be given a glimpse of No. 1.

Then fell the first blow of the year that was to prove so tragic. Immediately after his marriage Albert had done away with that unhappy estrangement which existed between the Queen and her mother, and now for over twenty years they had been on most affectionate terms. The Duchess of Kent had Frogmore in Windsor Park for her country residence, and Clarence House in London, and when the Court was at Balmoral she was close by at Aberfeldie. She was now in her seventy-fifth year, still rather foreign in speech, a cheerful and lively old lady, finding the evening of life a very serene and agreeable hour, devoted to her grandchildren and above all to Albert. She was seriously ill for only one day and died on March 16, 1861. The Queen was bewildered with grief, yet even in the first shock of this close bereavement, the most intimate she had ever known, death, the mystery and silence of it, had the strange fascination for her which she felt while quite a child, and she poured out to her diary and to Uncle Leopold a flood of details and emotions. Everything connected with her mother became "dearly and passionately loved," and Frogmore must be kept exactly as she left it. Her presence still dwelt there, and daily the Queen went there to realize the blank in her life. She clung to the sense of loneliness that these visits produced, and while assuring Uncle Leopold that she did not dwell on her grief, or was morbid about her loss, every line she wrote to him testified to the self-pity which consumed her. It was March now, and there were two months yet before her birthday, but she could hardly bear to think of her "poor birthday," so melancholy would it be. She explored all the avenues that justified her desolation : she hinted that "the *worst* trials are *yet* to come," and in the same breath she took pleasure in the "approval"

that people had shewn in the way she expressed her grief. All her mother's effects must be piously gone through, and that was both sacrilege and luxury, and among them she came on records concerning her early years, "little books with the accounts of my babyhood and they shew *such* unbounded tenderness ! Oh, I am so wretched to think *how* for a time two people most wickedly estranged us . . . I dare not think of it — it drives me *wild* now." * These two wicked people . . . they can have been none other than Lehzen and Sir John Conroy, and she drew a dear anguish from the misunderstandings of more than twenty years ago.

Life moved forward again : there was a succession of Royal visitors, and the Queen and the Prince Consort went over to Ireland in August to see the Prince of Wales who, though still under the eye of General Bruce, had been allowed to learn the duties of a subaltern in the Grenadier Guards, of which he was a Colonel, at the Curragh Camp. His father was not pleased with him or the other officers : they were not earnest enough about their profession and at Mess preferred talking about shooting or fishing to discussing military tactics. Bertie had better spend the remainder of that ludicrously long Cambridge vacation in Germany, where he would learn what keen fellows young German officers were. He had now been told about the matrimonial plans devised for him, and it was arranged that he should, while abroad, meet Princess Alexandra, now first on the list. So off he went from this slack Curragh Camp, and having seen No. 1, expressed no wish to see the six other eligibles, who, presumably, shut up their English grammars and dictionaries.

The Court went to Balmoral. There was an unusual number of "Great Expeditions" made incognito. Sometimes their identity was suspected, and once they actually

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 435-439.

were discovered, and a band saluted them, and the "fat old landlady of the inn where they were lodging put on a black satin dress with white ribbons and orange flowers." Being incognito was always a dramatic delight to the Queen; being eventually recognised supplied the satisfying climax.* Another time, when the inn was threatened with an influx of commercial travellers, the pleasing stratagem of announcing that they were a wedding-party from Aberdeen and were occupying all the rooms was brilliantly successful, and though occasionally the rations bordered on starvation, nothing could mar the delight of these days. A Highland gillie John Brown was now her factotum: he waited at table, he led her pony, and, as she wrote to Uncle Leopold, "he combined the offices of groom, footman, page and maid, I might almost say, as he is so handy about cloaks and shawls." Up to this year he had only attended her at Balmoral, but now he joined her at Windsor after she went south, and a few years later became her personal permanent attendant whether she was at Osborne, Windsor or London. Before the end of October the autumn frosts grew sharp and the trees were bare and it was time to get back to work again.† There was an anxious situation developing out of the Civil War in America. Popular feeling in England, shared by the Cabinet, was sympathetic with the Southern States, and two envoys had embarked on the English steamer *Trent*, to put their case to the English Government.‡

Death knocked again at the door of the House of Coburg. During the first half of November, King Pedro V of Portugal and his brother, first cousins of the Queen both died of typhoid. . . And the Prince Consort always found the English autumn trying: he was sleeping badly, but the Queen thought him better than he usually was at this time

* Mary Ponsonby, p. 23.

† Leaves, p. 87 note, pp. 153-159. Letters, I, iii, p. 461.

‡ Lee, Queen Victoria, p. 314.

of the year.* Towards the end of the month he got a chill inspecting the new buildings of the Military College at Sandhurst, and was rather rheumatic. There seemed no cause for anxiety, and a few days later he went down to Cambridge where the Prince of Wales was keeping his term. He was already twenty, but had no more freedom allowed him than a boy of fourteen, and General Bruce had complained that he was out of hand and asked for a dose of direct parental authority. It would have been easier for a very busy and an ailing man to have told his son to come to Windsor for his wiggling, but that would have lost him a day of study just before his terminal examination.

Then came very disquieting news. The *Trent* arrived, and her captain reported that she had been fired on by a Federal war-ship, she had been boarded and the Southern emissaries had been taken off the ship. This was a flagrant violation of international law, which, unless reparation and redress were instantly made, was an ample cause for war, as the outrage had been committed on the instructions of the Cabinet at Washington. It was believed that the Cabinet knew that war might come, and were seeking to gain the support of France, with the bribe of returning to her the French provinces of Canada.† Lord Russell therefore, as Foreign Secretary, had prepared a draft of a despatch to Lord Lyons, British Ambassador at Washington, instructing him to demand an instant apology from the American Government and the release of the emissaries captured from the *Trent*. Failing that he was to ask for his passports. This draft was sent to Windsor for the Queen's approval and was delivered there on the evening of November 30.

The Prince Consort was at work by seven o'clock next morning, studying the draft. The peremptory tone of it, he

* Letters, I, iii, p. 468.

† *Ibid.*, p. 469.

saw, was all wrong. Naturally the British Government could not allow the Flag to be insulted, but they must state that they were most unwilling to believe that this had been wantonly done : perhaps the Captain of their warship had acted on his own initiative. Washington must be given an opportunity to explain and also to realise the seriousness of the situation. Ill as he felt, and hardly able to hold his pen he wrote out these suggestions and took his draft to the Queen. Together they went through it, and she put in some small corrections. It was sent back to the Prime Minister, and the Cabinet adopted this changed and more conciliatory attitude. If they had not, there would probably have been war.

That was the last piece of work of the Prince's laborious days. He was sent to bed, but moved on to his sofa in the afternoon : there was restlessness, sleeplessness and loss of appetite, but neither the Queen nor the doctors were anxious. Sir James Clark diagnosed "a feverish sort of influenza" and at the end of the first week of December he seemed better. Then Doctor Jenner was called in and diagnosed typhoid. Reckoning from the day when the Prince first felt ill, after his visit to Sandhurst, he was now in the third week of the attack and improvement might be looked for, as his strength kept up and there were no unfavourable symptoms. The Queen continued to write quite cheerfully to Uncle Leopold, and it would seem that the doctors shared her views for the Prince of Wales was not sent for as must have been done if there was any real cause for alarm. Then came a sudden relapse, a telegram was sent to Cambridge, but when the Prince arrived it is doubtful whether his father knew him. He died on the night of December 14, 1861.*

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 468-474.

CHAPTER XIII

THE whole fabric of the Queen's domestic happiness was shattered. Albert had often spoken to her of the shortness of life, but she had felt "with instinctive certainty" that it would be granted to them to grow old together. In the darkness she clung, curiously unreticent, to the simple faith from which she never wavered. To one Minister she wrote: "The things of this world are of no interest to the Queen . . . for her thoughts are fixed above." To another that she had only "one consolation — to rejoin *him* again, never to part," and to Uncle Leopold that this parting "must be for *his* good, his happiness . . . His great soul is *now only* enjoying that for which it *was* worthy. And I will not envy him — only pray that *mine* may be perfected by it, and fit to be with him *eternally* for which blessed moment I earnestly long. . . He seems so *near* to me, so quite my own now. . . " *

From that conviction — the sense of his living presence, and of the sure reunion — sprang an inevitable resolution. In life he had been "her Angel and Master," his mind, known to her and her alone, had been the incarnation of a wisdom almost divine and by that and that alone she would shape her days. "I am also anxious," she wrote again to her Uncle, "to repeat *one* thing, and *that one* is my *firm* resolve, my *irrevocable* decision, viz. that his wishes — *his* plans — about everything, *his* views about *every* thing are to be my law! And *no human power* will make me swerve from

* Letters, pp. 474-476. II, i, 9, p. II.

what he decided and wished — and I look to you to *support* and *help* me in this. I apply this particularly as regards our children — Bertie etc., for whose future he had traced everything *so* carefully. I am *also determined* that *no one* person, may *he* be ever so good, ever so devoted among my servants — is to lead or guide or dictate *to me*. I know how *he* would disapprove it.”* It was not in private family life alone she was determined scrupulously to follow all that he had planned. “My unhappy country,” she wrote, “has lost *all* in losing him,” and in every question of State, both internal and in international policy she was resolved to make herself his sole interpreter. Hitherto he had thought for her, and now she must think for herself taking for her guide her knowledge of his mind derived from her twenty years of eager surrender to it.

It was indeed certain that she knew his mind well. The resolve she had made on her marriage that Albert should never meddle in political affairs, for the English would resent the interference of a foreigner, had swiftly melted before his beam, and for close on twenty years it was he who had spoken through her lips and his hands that had guided her pen : for all intents and purposes he had been the Crown. Melbourne, Peel and Aberdeen alike had a profound belief in his political wisdom and welcomed his advice and approved his Kingship. But then had come that long feud with Palmerston who merely ignored him and who in all their encounters had won every round. And Palmerston’s power against which the Victoria-Albert remonstrances had broken as in spent spray against a granite cliff was based not only on the support of his party but on the backing of the nation. To the nation the Prince Consort had remained to the day of his death a foreigner, a German, un-English, even anti-English, and all his sagacity

* Letters, I, iii, p. 476.

and his wise moderation had never shaken that opinion. Even those who like Sir Robert Peel and Lord Aberdeen appreciated his wisdom had deplored his Germanizing tendencies, and it seems certain that if he had lived to grow old with the Queen, this distrust of him must have increased and not diminished unless his most radical convictions had been reversed, and he had seen, as the Queen eventually did, that a united and powerful Germany, which was the central aim of his political faith, would become the gravest menace to the peace of Europe and the security of England. He had envisaged an England no longer sitting in darkness and barbarism, but illuminated, adopting German methods instead of its haphazard policies and acquiring the German culture and the pacific reasonableness for which he stood. He had envisaged a Germany united and immensely powerful, bound to England by ties of Royal blood and common national interests, built on lines of noble moral architecture, and filled, like his own Crystal Palace, with the industries of progressive civilization. But England after twenty years of his direction had not shewn the least of signs of accepting his views ; indeed his own continued unpopularity in the country sprang chiefly from his advocacy of this ideal and, for all his perspicacity, his radical want of understanding of the English made him unable to realize that his dream was an impossible Utopia. He was equally in error about Germany, for he had figured to himself a pacific and powerful Prussia which should be as detachedly philosophical as himself, and had he lived he would have awakened to a nightmare. The Germany over whose incubation he had been so diligent would have proved itself a creature of blood and iron, as if hatched from the egg of a cockatrice. To have revised his aspirations would have implied a complete apostasy from the convictions of a lifetime, and that is not easily made.

As for the days that were gone, the Queen again and again had proclaimed the country's devotion to him ; how enthusiastically he had been received at the functions he had attended with her, how he fascinated everybody wherever he went, how that glorious first of May when his Exhibition had been opened was the "greatest day in our history," how his triumph was complete, his name immortalized, and how the country had shewn itself worthy of him. But had she really believed it ? Was not the wish the father of the thought ? For now when she took the Duchess of Sutherland to look on his dead face, she exclaimed, "Will they do him justice now ?" *

Straight from the exuberant noonday of her life, and the vivid vitality of her early middle-age, she passed without pause into a long-drawn and melancholy evening. In that seclusion and eclipse she devoted herself to fulfilling the secret testament of Albert's wishes and plans known to herself alone, both in the public affairs of State and in the private direction of her family. Yet, oddly enough, the whole conduct of her life in its complete withdrawal from the functions which are no small part of monarchical duties, must surely have been in flat opposition to what Albert himself would have wished. She allowed the shrinking from all public contacts, natural to the first weeks or even months of mourning, wholly to obsess her. Long ago she had written, "How one *loves* to cling to one's grief," and she clung to it till it became to her a habit of morbid luxury, and out of it grew her hypochondriacal conviction that the state of her health would not permit her to do anything she found disagreeable. Her work was vastly increased by her determination to adhere to Albert's rule of reading and criticising every document that required her signature, however trivial it might be or however technical, and she clung

* Lee, Queen Victoria, p. 320.

to the prerogatives of the Crown with all her pertinacity. Twice in these early days, while the American crisis, so wisely handled by the Prince Consort, was still potentially dangerous, she pulled up Lord Russell for sending a note to the American Minister without her having approved it, and again for not having laid sufficient information before her to enable her to grasp the situation, but she must remain invisible. Three weeks, for instance, after the Prince's death it was absolutely necessary to hold a Council, but she sat in a room adjoining with the door open, out of sight. When the agenda had been dealt with, the Clerk of the Council put his head round the door and she nodded. He then closed the door and said "Approved." As for public appearances, it was not for three years that she shewed herself in London, driving across the Park in an open carriage from Buckingham Palace to Paddington after a Court. She wrote to Uncle Leopold to tell him how "*very painful*" she found it, yet all the time she had, we may suspect, a corner of a conscious eye on the gallery, for she added: "Everyone said that the difference shewn when *I* appeared and when Bertie and Alix drive was *not* to be described. Naturally for *them* no-one stops, or *runs*, as they always did, and *do* doubly now for me." * In that she was right, and when this long, largely self-imposed evening was over she was to find no shadows of night drawing on, but that the sun for her had stood still as in the valley of Gibeon, and that unexampled splendours, as of noon awaited her.

FROM the first she would depute none of her functions. The Prince of Wales was with her, solicitous for her and eager to serve, and nothing could have been more appropriate than that he should at once have entered on his apprenticeship. But that was out of the question, for Albert

* Letters, II, i, p. 233.

had pronounced him frivolous and feather-headed, and there soon began to ripen the fruit of the worst misjudgment he had ever made. For years, distrusting her son's judgement and discretion, she refused to take the reiterated advice of her Ministers, and let him learn the trade for which he was destined, while the notion that he had gifts which her husband lacked, would have seemed to her profane if it had not been so grotesque. She was grudging even in letting him undertake mere functional duties, and clung with a tragic fidelity to the uncomprehending verdict his father had passed on him because he had not responded to an utterly unsuitable system of education.

The Prince Consort had made elaborate plans for the future of his elder children, and the Queen duly carried them out. Pending the Prince of Wales's marriage, he had arranged a detailed schedule for a tour in the East under the governorship of General Bruce. The Queen was sure that she could not live long, and before he set out she made a memorandum of what he must do in case she died while he was abroad. Within two months of his father's death he started, going first to Egypt where, as was only natural, shooting crocodiles was more attractive than studying dynasties, and then to Constantinople where Sultan Abdul Aziz, as an allied Sovereign, was allowed to entertain him. Sir Henry Bulwer, British Ambassador to the Porte, formed a juster estimate of his qualities than was current at Windsor, and wrote to Lord Russell of the tact and felicity with which the Prince conversed with the Sultan on the topics for which he had been coached: the most acute diplomatist, thought Sir Henry, could not have done better, and he would learn all he needed not from books "but from observation, and use it with address." This certainly confirmed the impression he had made in Canada and the United States. A tour through Palestine followed and a few ex-

tremely agreeable days incognito with the Emperor and Empress of the French at Fontainebleau. After four months abroad he returned to Windsor, where, as General Bruce had warned him, frivolous conversation would not be welcome.

In the summer of 1862 came the marriage, already arranged and approved by the Prince Consort, of Princess Alice and Prince Louis of Hesse. The joyless and almost clandestine ceremony was performed in the drawing-room at Osborne. Then the more important matrimonial project for the Prince of Wales must be proceeded with. His mother had never yet seen Princess Alexandra, but she was first on the list of eligibles, and so in the strictest privacy the Queen went to stay with Uncle Leopold at Brussels, to meet her and her parents. Again her dominating thought was that it was "a terrible moment" for her to speak to them about the marriage without Albert's support. The young girl's beauty and charm made a most favourable impression, but still that determined joylessness prevailed and the Queen feared that the Princess would be entering a very sad house. Bertie could now be sent for to speak for himself, and the Queen went on to Coburg to visit the scenes that were now a shrine to her. News came that he had proposed and been accepted, and the Queen herself wrote the communication to the English press which announced the betrothal, stating that "it was based entirely upon mutual affection and the personal merits of the Princess, and was in no way connected with political considerations." She added, sealing it with final authority, that "The revered Prince Consort whose sole object was the education and welfare of his children had been long convinced that this was a most desirable marriage." *

There were good reasons for proclaiming that this was a

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 146.

love-match, for the Princess's mother was heiress to the throne of Denmark. The dispute about the Duchies of Schleswig and Holstein which Denmark claimed and which Bismarck was secretly determined to grab for Prussia was already growing hot, and Prussia interpreted this alliance as an indication that England was on the side of Denmark. Moreover since the reign of Queen Anne, who had married that Danish Prince 'Est-ce que possible,' the Sovereigns of England, and, with hardly an exception, all their younger children had married Germans : Germany had established sole right of way to the Royal nuptial chambers of England. The announcement, in consequence, was considered at Berlin in the nature of an unfriendly act. The comments of the Prussian press, clearly inspired, were most disagreeable, and the Prince of Wales strongly resented them. We may, in fact, date from this time the first sowing of the seed of his life-long hostility to Germany, which ran directly counter to the tradition in which his parents had brought him up.

The Queen had determined not to give the Prince anything to do in England, and to fill up the months before his marriage she sent him off for a cruise in the Mediterranean with the Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia, and in his absence she invited Princess Alexandra to pay her a ten days' visit at Osborne. It was much wiser that Bertie should not be there, for the Queen firmly held the traditional conventions that when young people of importance were betrothed they had better not see too much of each other before marriage : else, as Lord Melbourne had said, they might find something in each other which they did not like. Let them marry first and adjust themselves afterwards. Also the Queen wanted a heart to heart talk with the girl.

Not long before the Prince Consort's death he had ex-

plained to his son that this Danish marriage would be a delicate matter requiring tact : he must be very circumspect and careful in speech and act for fear of offending his numerous German relations, and Bertie had understood him "as well as a boy of his age and capacity could." The Queen's business with the Princess was of the same political intent. Plain speech, a firm statement of her instructions was needful : Alexandra must clearly understand that, whatever was her own natural affection for her country, she must keep it well under. She was marrying into the English Royal Family, and whatever her father's feelings might be over the approaching crisis about the Duchies, the Prince Consort, who knew more about the rights of the matter than anybody, had pronounced that Denmark had no right to them, and that was sufficient. These conversations must have been rather appalling, and, as they were carried on among funereal surroundings, it says volumes for the charm and sweetness of the Princess that she managed to continue "*comme un rayon de soleil*" piercing the gloom. But during those days a tie of real affection and regard was woven between the two, which for the next forty years remained unbroken.

Again a Crown hovered over the heads of the House of Coburg : for a while it seemed as if it must settle on one of them. King Otho had been deposed from the throne of Greece in the spring of 1862, and the national assembly, sagaciously hoping that the appointment of an English King might lead to the cession of the Ionian Islands, enthusiastically elected Prince Alfred. The Queen was at first in favour of it,* but she found that Albert in a conversation with Prince Alfred's governor had decided that since the Prince of Wales would be King of England, Alfred, as his second son, must succeed to the Dukedom of Coburg, on

* *Lec, Queen Victoria*, 331.

the death of his childless uncle Ernest. That was enough ; the Queen saw the "total impossibility" of the idea, and told Lord Palmerston "that upon no earthly account and under no circumstances would she ever consent to it." * Another objection equally compelling, though not so emotionally final was that England's treaty obligations with the Powers guaranteeing the independence of Greece provided that no member of the Royal Families of Russia, France or England should accept the throne.

But the vacant Crown still hovered over Coburg, and the reigning Duke Ernest was the next suggestion. He had the true Coburg passion for Kingship, and was willing to take it on condition that he might retain his throne at Coburg with Prince Alfred as his Regent there while he was looking after his Greek dominions. The King of the Belgians thought that was a very good plan — probably he suggested it to his nephew himself — but again the Queen would not hear of it. Alfred must never be Regent of Coburg unless he was "quite independent of Ernest and could rectify the sad misgovernment that had gone on there for so long." Besides those touchy Greeks would want a King who was not doubling a part.† Yet it was a pity that if a Crown was going a Coburg should not get it, and the Queen wrote to her Cousin Ferdinand of Portugal, to know if he would take it, or did Lord Russell think that Prince Edward Leiningen would do ? He was another Coburg, being grandson of the Duchess of Kent. Or how about yet another Coburg Prince, Augustus ? Even Uncle Leopold, who had refused the same Crown thirty years ago, said that if he had been a younger man, and was assured that England would give the Ionian Islands to Greece, he would undertake it with pleasure. Indeed the House of Coburg did its very

* Letters, II, i, p. 43.

† *Ibid.*, p. 48.

best to secure another Crown. Pending these family efforts no answer was returned to the Greeks declining the offer on behalf of Prince Alfred for several months. Though it had to be refused, the suggestion had gratified the Queen very much, and she attributed it not to the desire of Greece to get the Ionian Islands, but to far more touching reasons. "It is a high compliment paid to our child," she wrote to Lord Russell, "which the Queen *cannot* but believe is *chiefly* owing to the respect and admiration for our beloved great Prince, and to the confidence entertained in the education which his father must have given to his children. The Queen would wish some allusion to *this* fact to be introduced into the answer." * Then, after all, the Crown was collaterally kept in the Family, for it was now offered to Prince William George, brother of Princess Alexandra, who duly became King George of Greece in the autumn of 1863, aged seventeen.

The conduct of these negotiations was most trying to the Queen, and in her letters to her Ministers and her Uncle she continually alluded to the helplessness she felt in the loss of her invariable counsellor "whose wise and admirable memorandums so often *averted* great evils." She clung to her loss, nursing her woe, and finding her chief consolation in going every day to the Mausoleum. Then came a further anxiety. Prince Alfred, on his ship at Malta, got typhoid. It was typhoid that had taken Albert from her, and again she wrote to her Uncle in a pitiful confused anguish: "I can't imagine *how* anyone *can* recover from this dire fever if *he didn't* . . . and if dear Alfie *should* recover I think my *own* darling must return too." †

The Prince of Wales's marriage was at hand, and Gladstone, as Chancellor of the Exchequer, had already had a

* Letters, II, i, pp. 53, 60-63.

† *Ibid.*, p. 68.

private talk with the Queen about his annuity, and had made quite a good impression. His proposals were to bring the Prince's income from the Duchy of Cornwall up to £100,000 a year, to give the Princess £10,000 a year, and, in case of her widowhood, £30,000. The Queen thought the latter was small and not sufficient for her to bring up children : if Albert had been left a widower instead of she a widow, he could never have managed. Gladstone quite agreed : indeed through all the frictions of the coming years, he invariably supported the Queen in her numerous requests on behalf of her children, and on this occasion Parliament passed the grants very cordially. Guests began to arrive : the first was the Crown Princess of Prussia who brought with her her eldest son William, "a clever, dear, good little child" thought his grandmother. The wedding was celebrated on March 10, 1863 at St. George's Chapel, Windsor, for the Queen absolutely refused to have it at Westminster Abbey, since she would have had to make a public appearance, and, though a widow of fifteen months, she would not put off her crape for a single day. She took no part in the function, only watching it from a gallery in the Chapel.

The Queen's very full account of the day, as given in her diary, is a key to the long seclusion that followed. To the nation the marriage of the heir to the throne was naturally an event for flags and peals of bells, but to his mother every incident, every moment of it kindled some spark of heart-breaking memory which she cherished and blew into flame. Clever little William had been such a favourite of the Prince Consort's, and now *he* was not there. Her two married daughters had loving husbands, and Bertie took his lovely bride to Osborne, but she herself, who so needed love and tenderness, sat "lonely and desolate," and remembered that her children were fatherless. Her daughter Louise

wore the pearls which had belonged to Albert's mother : she herself wore the badge of the Garter which had been his, and the Victoria and Albert Order with his head above hers, and a miniature of him. And how she suffered while the ceremony was going on to think that the "guardian angel of the family" was not there ; and how the departure of the young married couple for their honeymoon recalled "*our* driving away twenty-three years ago *to* Windsor." Not a gleam of joy at her son's marriage illumined her desolation, not a gleam of thankfulness for her own twenty-one years of domestic happiness, or that eight of her children were gathered round her, and that there was good news of Alfred from Malta. By that cruel, irresistible alchemy of hypochondria in this difficult period of a woman's life, she transmuted motherly joy into the emptiness of widowhood, and re-fashioned flags and banners into instruments for her own self-torture.*

Previously to her husband's death she had mainly been in London while Parliament was sitting, as was only right for a Sovereign who insisted on being consulted by her Ministers on every point that might arise, but from now onwards she certainly did not on the average spend a week of the year in town. For four months at the outside she was at Windsor, the remainder she passed at her two sequestered country homes which Albert had created. For some weeks in May and June during the session she was always at Balmoral, and though a Ministerial crisis might threaten she would make the greatest difficulty about postponing her journey there even by a day or two or hastening her return : often she refused altogether. Strange, indeed, was the contrast between this indifference to her duties and the conscientiousness which had forbade her to spend more than a couple of days of honeymoon after her marriage at

* Letters, II, i, pp. 58-77.

Windsor. She had explained the reason for that very clearly to Albert: "You seem to forget, my dearest love, that I am the Sovereign and that business can stop and wait for nothing. Parliament is sitting, and something occurs almost every day for which I may be required. I am never easy a moment if I am not on the spot, and see and hear what is going on." * Now nothing would induce her to be on the spot, though, in the remote wilds of the Highlands, feeding her grief, she worked at State businesses with un-remitting industry. For that, when presently a general feeling arose that she had much better abdicate in favour of her son, she was never given due credit. She was a slave to such duties as she could perform unseen and absent.

Unfortunately this seclusion in which she cherished the sense of her loss, made a forcing-house for its perpetuation, and her morbid self-pity flourished side by side with hypochondriacal fears for her health. She was in a state of nervous instability in which her own comfort, as always happens in such cases, was a constant preoccupation. She thought that Princess Alice and her husband and her baby ought to make their home with her instead of going back to their own home at Darmstadt. Then she fixed on her next unmarried daughter Princess Helena. She did not intend, she wrote to Uncle Leopold, that the Princess should marry for two or three years yet, but when she did, the Queen "could *not* give her up without *sinking* under the *weight* of my desolation." She would therefore look out for a "young sensible Prince . . . who can during my lifetime make my house his principal home." A good character with sufficient means to support her daughter in case of her own death was all she asked for. Again it seemed a cruel piece of selfishness that her valued Lady-in-waiting, Lady Augusta Bruce, had at the age of forty-one "most un-

* Letters, I, i, p. 213.

-necessarily decided to marry (!!) that certainly most distinguished and excellent man Dr. Stanley !! . . It has been my *greatest sorrow* and trial since my misfortune ! I thought she *never* would leave *me* !” She fondled her ailments : she referred her Uncle to her doctors in order that they should tell him “how very important it is that I should have *no* excitement, *no* agitation, if I am to live on.” She believed that she would die sooner than any of them thought : “for myself this would be the *greatest greatest* blessing : but for the poor children I feel a *few* more years would be desirable, and for the country, I *own*, it alarms me still more.”* For Bertie would be King, and one of the main clauses in her melancholy creed was his unfitness. Between the work that was a sacred duty to her, and, for relaxation, this incessant dwelling on herself, it says much for the essential soundness of her constitution that these years of seclusion did not wreck her health.

* Letters, II, i, pp. 85, 92, 114.

CHAPTER XIV

THE hegemony of Prussia over confederated German states so ardently desired by the Prince Consort, and now so doubly desirable to the Queen owing to her eldest daughter's position as Crown Princess, was still far from accomplishment, and in 1863 it looked as if Austria rather than Prussia might become the head of a Teutonic Empire. The two countries had already been in disagreement over the insurrection in Poland, and in the late summer of this year the Queen broke her Osborne seclusion and went out to Coburg as she had done the year before, partly for pious pilgrimage, partly to interview the King of Prussia and the Emperor of Austria and try to bring them together. Her efforts only proved that England's prestige was valueless in Continental politics. But any fear of conflict between them was averted by a further international complication which for the time brought Austria and Prussia into alliance, and proved to be the first step in Prussian aggrandisement. This was the Schleswig-Holstein question. Though it was complicated by a thousand side issues the main threads of it were fairly simple.

There were three claimants for the possession of the Duchies of whom the first was the King of Denmark by virtue of his being Duke of Schleswig-Holstein, though Schleswig was partly German in population and Holstein almost entirely so. This year the Danish Rigsrad passed a Bill incorporating Schleswig and altering the constitution

of Holstein. This was in violation of the London Protocol of 1852 which assigned to both Duchies German supervision. The Bill never received the signature of King Frederick VII of Denmark who was then on his death-bed, but it was signed by his successor King Christian IX, the father of the Princess of Wales, who inherited the throne through his wife.

The second claimant for the Duchies was Duke Frederick of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Augustenburg. His father Duke Christian had sold his rights in the Duchies to Denmark for the sum of £350,000, and in the same Protocol of 1852 had renounced his claim to them. But now Duke Frederick said he had not been party to that sale and claimed his hereditary right to the Duchies.

The third claimant was Prussia or rather Bismarck. This was just such an opportunity as he rejoiced in. Other people were quarrelling and there was an excuse to intervene because King Christian of Denmark had set aside the German supervision of the Duchies, and Duke Frederick of Augustenburg was asserting his rights to what his father had sold. Behind that excuse was the solid reason that the possession of the Duchies would give sea-board to Prussia, and that the capital of Holstein was a very nice little port called Kiel. Bismarck therefore procured an alliance with the Emperor of Austria to expel the Danes from the Duchies and occupy them jointly: in fact Austria and Prussia were to share the swag. The Queen's sympathies wavered at first between Augustenburg and Prussia, but very soon Prussia weighed down the scale. This was inevitable, for a strong Prussia was the chiefest of Albert's ideals, and he had also come to the conclusion that neither Denmark nor Duke Frederick had any claims on the Duchies at all. But there was very strong pro-Danish sympathy both in the Cabinet and the country: it was felt that minute

Denmark was being scandalously bullied, and now more than ever the Queen missed Albert's directing wisdom and support, and "his admirable *memoranda* which are *gospel now*." She was sore too about the futility of her diplomatic efforts at Coburg in the summer, and she wrote distractedly to her Uncle that she was "*miserable, wretched, almost frantic without my Angel to stand by me, and put the others down, and in their right places. No respect is paid to my opinion now, and this helplessness almost drives me wild.*" *

Domestic disagreements added to her trouble. The Crown Prince and Princess of Prussia came to stay with her at Windsor in December, and though the Queen had always believed that the consanguinity of high Royal personages conduced to harmony between their countries, it was now apparent that disagreements between countries conduced to painful discord between the consanguine. The Queen indeed found herself the only true Prussian present, for Fritz and Vicky, who both detested Bismarck and all his works, were upholders of Duke Frederick, while Bertie and Alix, in spite of those firm conversations at Osborne last year, when Alix had promised to be a good German and not make Bertie a Dane, were both of them, now that war was imminent, violently pro-Denmark. It was all so painful (and it was not good for Alix to be excited just now) that the Queen exercised her rights as a hostess and said she hoped she would not hear the words Schleswig-Holstein again. . . But plenary forgiveness was granted to the Danes when on January 8, 1864 the Princess of Wales gave birth to a son. The birth was premature by two months, and the Queen hurried from Osborne to Frogmore to be with her daughter-in-law. "Albert" must be the baby's first name: and the Queen took the opportunity to impress on the Prince

* Letters, II, i, p. 117.

that when he came to the Throne he must be known as King Albert Edward. It would be monstrous to drop his father's name, and Albert alone would not do, "as there can be only *one* ALBERT." * The baby, she privately thought was "a poor little bit of a thing," but it stood in the direct succession, and London must not be deprived of "the honour and gratification" of its being christened there. The private chapel of Buckingham Palace would be the least public place, and though it would be a great trial she, D. V., would hold the baby herself and present it to the Archbishop of Canterbury.

A week after the baby's birth Bismarck, in the name of Prussia and Austria, sent an ultimatum to King Christian of Denmark, to evacuate Schleswig within forty-eight hours, and war broke out. Since Prussia was engaged, the Crown Princess had instantly to jettison Duke Frederick and become Prussian *sang pur*. As such she was extremely indignant with the English press and Parliament for daring to express pro-Danish and anti-Prussian sentiments. England, she assured her mother, was only making herself an object of contempt in Prussia and this "meddling and interfering of England in other people's affairs has become so ridiculous abroad that it almost ceases to annoy." † Prussia was at war, Fritz was going to the front, and, blandly obliterating the fact that a few weeks ago she had championed poor Duke Frederick, she poured scorn on everybody including Bertie who was not Prussian to the core.

The best friends of Denmark could only hope that the war would be soon over, and by the middle of July the two Duchies were in the hands of Prussia and Austria. But the Family feud was only accentuated : the Prince and

* Letters, II, i, p. 153.

† *Ibid.*, p. 171.

Princess of Wales, after a visit to Denmark in the autumn, went on to Hanover, and on their way home they met his brother-in-law Fritz "in Prussian uniform flaunting before our eyes a most objectionable ribbon which he had received for his *deeds of valour* ??? against the unhappy Danes." Vicky was equally withering about the way in which Garibaldi had been fêted in England. Bertie had come up from Sandringham just to call on him, and so she wrote a very superior letter to her mother saying how shocked Berlin was at all this fuss made over him, but she only regarded it as ludicrous.*

There was a pause in international disturbances, in 1865. Bismarck was contriving how to evade the Convention of Gastein which assigned the administration of Schleswig to Prussia and of Holstein to Austria, the object in view being to secure for Prussia alone the territories which the two had occupied jointly. The Queen was beginning to see that Bismarck's Prussia was not Albert's Prussia, for whose strength it was a sacred duty to work, and even before the Convention was signed she made a complete *volte face*, and wrote to her Uncle, "Prussia seems inclined to behave as atrociously as possible, and as she *has always done*. Odi-ous people the Prussians are, *that* I *must* say." Though there was considerable support in Holstein for the claims of Duke Frederick, the Convention deprived him of all his estates, and his younger brother Prince Christian was obliged to give up his commission in the Prussian army. The Queen already had him in her mind as a possible husband for her third daughter Princess Helena, for, having no coun-try of his own, he would naturally live in England, and so she would not be parted from her daughter. He had not, it is true, much independent means, but Parliament would no doubt help. Otherwise he was most suitable : Duke

* Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 248, 256. Letters, II, i, p. 189.

Ernest thought highly of him, and the Crown Princess to whom she had applied early in the year gave him an excellent character. He was amusing when he chose, he spoke English and was "the best creature in the world." * So when the Queen went to Coburg again in August to unveil a further statue of the Prince Consort, she took Princess Helena with her, and her brother-in-law invited Prince Christian, and the betrothal took place. There was assembled at Coburg a large party of the Queen's German relations, and she announced this news. Prussia, by the mouth-piece of its Bismarckian press, was highly indignant : it held that the Queen intended this to be a pointed expression of her views as to the shabby manner in which Duke Frederick and his brother had been treated. That was quite wide of the truth : it would have been utterly unlike her to have assembled her relations for the announcement of the marriage in order to annoy Prussia. But what was extremely like her was to make public a purely domestic matter when and how and where it suited her. Bismarck, however, took it as another instance—he was beginning to collect them—of her anti-Prussian sentiments.

The Queen returned to Balmoral, and there on October 15 the news of Lord Palmerston's serious illness reached her. It was the twenty-sixth anniversary of her own betrothal : that, and the fear that in case of his death she might have to leave for Windsor a few days earlier than she had intended were her first thoughts. He died three days afterwards, and with almost vindictive honesty, she made no pretence to forgive the past. "I never liked him," she wrote to her Uncle, "or could even the least respect him, nor could I forget his conduct on certain occasions to my Angel." He was eighty, he had been a Minister of the Crown with short intermissions for fifty-eight years, but she could say no

* Ponsonby, *Letters of Empress Frederick*, p. 57.

more for this life-time of service than that he had many valuable qualities though many bad ones. . . Poor Lord Palmerston, "*alias* Pilgerstein." Before the year was out came yet another death, that of Uncle Leopold on December 10. She felt his loss but with no sense of despair. She had known him from the days of her babyhood, he had been the chief contriver of her blissful marriage, he was wrapped up with the past and in the Mausoleum his spirit seemed strangely to mingle with Albert's.* But her sense of the past was really filled by one memory only.

Since 1861 the Queen had absolutely ignored the hitherto unbroken tradition of the Sovereign opening Parliament in person, and when two years ago her Ministers had tried to induce her to resume it, she said it "was totally out of the question" by reason of the "moral shocks" and fatigue it would entail and there was the end of it. But the resentment of the nation against her continued invisibility was getting serious and there was an additional reason why she should appear in person at the opening of the session in 1866, namely that she intended to ask Parliament for two more grants for her children, a dowry of £30,000 with an annuity of £6000 for Princess Helena on her approaching marriage, and an annuity of £15,000 for Prince Alfred on his coming of age. If once more she absented herself there was a horrid chance of her Commons refusing supplies, and she steeled herself to the effort. Her correspondence makes us realize how acute this demophobia had become and how piteously real to her were the nervous phantoms which her indulgence in it had evoked. In her quiet home at Osborne with one or two members of her family and some congenial guest like Sir Edwin Landseer, she would often be in excellent spirits, talking much and

* Letters, II, i, pp. 277, 279-289.

much enjoying herself,* but the menace of a public appearance sufficed to work her up into hysteria again.

The settling of the date for the function produced endless difficulties. February 8 was the day first fixed but this would never do. She had settled to go to Windsor on February 15th, and since it was quite impossible that she should spend February 10th there, as this was the anniversary of her wedding-day, she would thus have to come up from Osborne on the 7th and return there on the 9th, and thus only get six days' rest before going back to Windsor on the 15th. This series of journeys would completely knock her up, so the date was changed to Tuesday February 6. Lord Russell therefore assumed that she would go to Windsor on Saturday February 4. Again impossible, for "to enable the Queen to go through what *SHE can* only compare to an execution, it is of importance to keep the *thought* of it as much from her mind as possible, and therefore the going to Windsor *to wait* for two *whole* days for this dreadful ordeal would do her positive harm." She would come up from Osborne on the 5th, and easily reach Windsor that night. . . . And then she felt she must once for all express to Lord Russell the agony she was going through: "The Queen must say that she does feel *very bitterly* the want of feeling of those who *ask* the Queen to go to open Parliament. That the public should wish to see her she fully understands, and has *no* wish to prevent — quite the contrary: but why this wish should be of so *unreasonable* and unfeeling a nature as to *long* to witness the spectacle of a poor widow, nervous and shrinking, dragged in *deep mourning* *ALONE in STATE* as a *Show* where she used to go supported by her husband to be gazed at, without delicacy of feeling, is a thing *she cannot* under-

* Mary Ponsonby, pp. 59, 63, etc.

-stand, and she never could wish her bitterest foe to be exposed to!"* So distorted an interpretation of the desire of her people to see her perform her regal functions again would be ludicrous if the sincerity of her agony did not render it pathetic. She truly believed herself to be the victim of barbarous cruelties.

The contrast between the Prussia of Albert's dreams and the Prussia of Bismarck's fashioning, was now as white is to black. The disputes with Austria over the disposition of the Duchies, which Bismarck fully intended to retain for Prussia alone, were growing hotter, and it was clear that there was imminent danger of war. Neither the King of Prussia nor the Crown Prince wanted it, but Bismarck with his policy of blood and iron had the whip-hand and was establishing the domination of military power which was not broken till 1918. At his instance a circular was sent out to the States of the German Confederation peremptorily demanding to know whether they would support Prussia or fight against her, and thus family ties became entangled, for one of the Queen's daughters was Crown Princess of Prussia, another would be Grand Duchess of Hesse, the blind King George of Hanover was her first cousin, and her brother-in-law Duke of Coburg. Of these Hesse-Darmstadt, Hanover and Coburg were by no means pro-Bismarck and the dream of a unified Germany began to wear a sinister aspect. In vain the Queen appealed to the King of Prussia as her "Beloved Brother" to avert the catastrophe: she reminded him that the responsibility of war would rest on him alone, and, in violation of strict monarchical etiquette, she told him that he was being deceived by "one man." This was just such an intrusion into the internal affairs of a foreign country as she would have resented herself.

The Crown Princess was of the same mind: "Not a day

* Letters, II, i, pp. 288, 295, 296.

passes," she wrote to her mother, "that the wicked man does not with the *greatest* ability counteract and thwart what is good and drive on towards war."* But no intervention was of avail. Bismarck merely abused the Queen as a meddling-some woman who wanted to manage the affairs of Prussia and went on with his work. He bribed Italy with the promise of restoration to her of the Veneto at the expense of Austria to enter on the Prussian side, and the Seven Weeks' war broke out. All effective resistance on the part of Austria was broken by the battle of Sadowa on July 3, 1866.

It was almost inevitable that at this swift and triumphant close the Crown Princess had come to think very differently about it. She still stuck to it that the "uncontrolled power of an unprincipled man" had been responsible for war, but her Fritz had been in command of victorious armies, and what a great nation Prussia, over which he would sometime rule, was becoming! Her relations had suffered: the kingdom of Hanover was absorbed into Prussia, and her blind cousin the King dispossessed. Hesse-Darmstadt, where her sister Alice would be Grand Duchess, was shorn of territory, but these lands and revenues had become Prussia, and that made a great deal of difference. She adopted a hortatory style with her mother: she told her that "one *must separate* one's *feelings* for one's relations quite from one's *judgment* of *political necessities*. . . *They were told beforehand what they would have to expect; they chose* to go with Austria and they now share the sad fate she confers on her allies." Uncle Ernest on the other hand, and the rulers of other states had remained neutral and no harm had come to them. A lesson for those who opposed Prussia! She could not and would not forget that she was a Prussian, and of course it was difficult to make

* Letters, II, i, pp. 312-318. Letters of Empress Frederick, p. 59.

Mamma, "or any other non-German" understand. . . The Queen must have found these filial lectures hard to bear, for a year ago she had pronounced the Prussians odious, and now when, owing to their seizure of her relations' territories she thought them more odious than ever, there was her daughter telling her that "I am *now* every bit as proud of being a Prussian as I am of being an Englishwoman. . . I must say that the Prussians are a superior race as regards intelligence and humanity, education and kind-heartedness." * And the worst of it was that this was what her Angel had always maintained ! But he had not meant it to apply to the new creature of blood and iron which was now Prussia.

In spite of the Queen's passionate denunciation of those who were unfeeling enough to make her open Parliament, the rigidity of her seclusion began to melt a little. She reviewed troops at Aldershot, she attended the wedding of her beloved cousin Mary of Cambridge to the Duke of Teck, son by a morganatic marriage of Duke Alexander of Würtemberg, and first cousin of the Queen on her mother's side. She held a Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace, though nothing would induce her not to flee to Balmoral exactly when a Ministerial crisis occurred over the Reform Bill in June. While she was there the Government was defeated and Lord Russell resigned. She was extremely angry with him, for she had particularly desired him to hold on while she was away, and she refused to accept his resignation. On coming back to Windsor she sent for Lord Derby who took office, with Disraeli as Chancellor of the Exchequer. She attended the wedding of Princess Helena and gave away the bride herself, and back at Balmoral again, attended the Highland Gathering at Braemar, opened water-works at Aberdeen where for the first time since 1861 she read a speech in public, and later in the

* Letters, II, i, p. 271. Letters of Empress Frederick, pp. 65, 66.

autumn attended the unveiling of a statue of the Prince, Consort at Wolverhampton. She wondered at her own firmness, still immensely pitying herself, but she no longer felt that her people wished to look at her as a "Show." On the contrary there was "something peculiar and touching in the joy and even emotion with which they greeted the poor widowed Queen," and that was a great change. Again in February 1867, she opened Parliament without any nervous crisis. Lord Derby had but to tell her that her presence would give moral support to her Government and she consented at once, though with the stipulation that it must be "clearly understood that she is *not* expected to sit as a *matter* of course, year after year." Then she received the whole Corps Diplomatique and the Government at the Household with their wives and daughters at Buckingham Palace without a lamentation that she was alone, and in May she laid the foundation-stone of the Royal Albert Hall and replied to an address of welcome.*

The ebb tide had certainly begun to flow again, slowly but perceptibly, and she began to dwell on the vanished years less with personal desolation than with a treasuring pride that they were hers and with the desire that all the world should know her Angel as he was. It is to this change of attitude towards the past that, psychologically, we must attribute her gradual emergence from the long *Dämmerung*. Her habit of thought reversed itself and, instead of wailing over the irrevocable, she unsealed from it a spring of renewed vitality. General Grey, once the Prince Consort's Secretary and now her own, had already brought out, under the Queen's supervision, a history of his early years, and now she asked Mr. Theodore Martin to write his whole life on a much larger scale. The real truth and

* Letters, II, i, pp. 367, 379, 391. More Leaves, pp. 46, 47. Lee, Queen Victoria, p. 377.

nothing but the truth, as she knew it, must be told : the Prince must be shewn, full length, as he was to her. She supplied the mass of his private papers on which these five substantial volumes were based, and read and criticised every chapter as it was written.* For herself, she added supplementary side-lights of her own composition, by making with Sir Arthur Helps's assistance, a volume of extracts from her diary entitled "Leaves from a Journal of our Life in the Highlands from 1848 to 1861." It was privately published in 1867, and at Sir Arthur's promptings given to the public next year, with elaborate biographical notes by the Queen about the gillies, keepers and personal attendants who figure so constantly in its pages. It was out and away the best seller of the year, and there is nothing to wonder at in that, for it consisted entirely of those domestic trivialities, into which, in the lives of the eminent, the public loves to be admitted. Simplicity was the keynote of its contents and its style : it dealt with picnics and dogs and sunsets, with teas on the hillside, and the difficulty of making water boil out of doors, with Albert stalking a stag and Vicky sitting down on a wasps' nest. As for the style, which Sir Arthur Helps thought too colloquial, it was an admirable vehicle for what it conveyed, and the Queen was right to defend it, for : "It was the simplicity of the style and the absence of all appearance of writing for effect which had given the book such immense and undeserved success." It was noticed that after the publication the Queen's conversation had a strong literary flavour, and she asked Lady Augusta Stanley, who had deserted her for marriage, to get Mr. Carlyle, Mr. Grote and Mr. Robert Browning to meet her at tea at the Deanery, Westminster. Mr. Browning was a very agreeable man, but Mr. Carlyle was rather disconcerting, for he was "a strange-looking eccentric old Scotchman,

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 374.

who holds forth in a drawling melancholy voice, with a broad Scotch accent, upon Scotland and upon the utter degeneration of everything." She made a better impression on him: he thought it "impossible to imagine a politer little woman," and her demeanour was very pretty and gracious.*

There were occasional serious relapses in this welcome process of revitalization, in which, for one whose nerves were shattered and who thought herself on the verge of a complete breakdown, she fought with amazing vigour in defence of her seclusion. One such occurred at the time of the International Exhibition in Paris in 1867. The Emperor Napoleon was making a tremendous occasion of this, and among his guests for the Prize-giving Day were to be Tsar Alexander II of Russia, the Emperor of Austria, the Sultan of Turkey, the Khedive Ismail of Egypt, and the Prince of Wales who was President of the Royal Commission for the English section: he had also asked the Pope who declined. Just as the Emperor Franz Josef was leaving Vienna came the terrible news of the court-martial and shooting of his brother the Emperor Maximilian of Mexico, and his visit was cancelled, but all the other Sovereigns had already arrived and the fêtes could not be put off.

This assemblage of Crowned heads had a high political significance. Earlier in the year there had been trouble over the Duchy of Luxembourg which might easily have led to war. Prussia had begun to build forts on her French frontiers, and Napoleon counter-checked by proposing to King Leopold II of Belgium that France would agree to Belgium's annexing the Duchy in return for a strip of Belgian territory. On the urgent advice of the Queen who saw how inflammable was the situation, a conference was

* Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 376. Mary Ponsonby, p. 63. Letters, II, i, p. 586. Froude, *Life of Carlyle*, ii, p. 370. Carlyle in London, ii, p. 379.

held in London in May, which secured the independence of Luxembourg and the dismantling of the Prussian fortresses then in building. This galaxy of Crowns therefore at Paris symbolized renewed amity, and it was most important that England should make a suitable gesture. But would the Queen make it? It seemed very doubtful, for she worked herself up into a nervous crisis over the idea of her having to entertain Royal guests. The worst of it was that Royal personages were coming to England whether she liked it or not, for the Sultan Abdul Aziz and the Khedive Ismail had already signified their intention of doing so. Never before, so the Prime Minister pointed out, had a Sultan visited London: English influence just now was paramount at Constantinople, it was most important to maintain it, and after the magnificent reception Napoleon would have given him in Paris, it would be disastrous if he was welcomed less royally here. The Queen replied that she would give him lodging at Buckingham Palace, but she would not put forward her return from Balmoral by a single day on his account: rest and quiet were essential for her. Moreover since the Sultan's visit was a matter of political importance, the Government ought to bear part of the expense of his entertainment. But when the date of the Sultan's visit was settled, she found she would naturally be at Osborne, and thought that a Naval Review would interest him. She would go out on the *Victoria and Albert*, unless the weather was bad, and receive him. Otherwise he might pay her a morning call at Osborne. What did Lord Derby think of that?

Lord Derby thought very poorly of it. According to the proposed dates the Sultan would have been languishing at Buckingham Palace for five days before the Naval Review without seeing her at all. With many apologetic expressions he pointed out that such neglect might alienate him

from England and throw him into the arms of France. Could she not stop at Windsor for three days before she went to Osborne, so as to be there when the Sultan arrived, and either welcome him at Buckingham Palace — ten minutes would be sufficient — or let him come to lunch with her at Windsor? Her Government thought it so important that they would sign a Minute of the Cabinet about it. At that her indignation at this interference with her private plans became hysterical. Surely if the Sultan knew how inconvenient it was to put off her departure for Osborne he would come a day earlier! She longed for the time when she could go to that world "where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest." She sent Dr. Jenner to Lord Derby to tell him what the real state of her nerves was. She would not be dictated to or teased by public clamour into doing "what she *physically* CANNOT." * But she yielded.

Then there was the Tsar. He had entertained the Prince of Wales for three weeks in the preceding autumn, but his time in Paris was short, and as she would still be at Balmoral when he left for Russia (there was no question of her shortening her stay there) Lord Derby begged her to send him the Garter to Paris, otherwise he must feel aggrieved if, after his magnificent entertainment of the Prince, the Queen took no notice of him. A graceful autograph letter (Lord Derby thought) regretting that her absence in Scotland prevented her from asking him to England, would much enhance the gift. Emphatically not, said the Queen. She would send the Tsar the Garter, and she would write, but she would not say that her absence in Scotland prevented her from inviting him. She evidently suspected a sinister design of getting her to resume those visits of foreign Royalties to England, for she added: "The Queen is UT-

* Letters, II, i, pp. 426-443.

TERLY *incapable* of entertaining any Royal personage as she would *wish* to do, except those who are very nearly related to her, and for whom she need not alter her mode of life !” * As for the Khedive, he would have been lodged at Claridge’s Hotel, had not Lord Dudley, without any charge to the nation, put his house in Park Lane at his disposal.

Owing to the exertions of the Prince of Wales this extremely important visit went off very well. He met the Sultan at Dover, he took him down to lunch with his mother next day at Windsor and kept him gorged with entertainments and receptions till the day of the Naval Review. Then there was the question of what Order he should receive, and the Prince convinced her that to offer any Order except the Garter to a reigning Sovereign, be he Christian or Moslem, would be nothing less than an insult ; his predecessor had been given it after the Crimean War, and the Sultan had set his heart on it. So the Queen invested him with it when he came on board the *Victoria and Albert* at the Naval Review. Evidently she rather enjoyed the day, as she had now begun to do, when once she had strung herself up to do anything, and noted humorous incidents in her Journal : how Ismail, who accompanied the Sultan, had very short legs, and had to sit on the extreme edge of his chair in order to get his feet on the ground : how the Sultan, being a poor sailor, made frequent retirements below, and thus did not see much of the Review. But he was enchanted with his visit and his decoration, and thanks to the Prince, left England in a very good temper.†

Unfortunately the Queen showed no signs of revising her low opinion of her eldest son’s abilities and trustworthiness, and in default of any regular employment he had to devote

* Letters, II, i, p. 430.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 445, 446.

his exuberant energies to amusing himself. It was her adherence to this conjugal tradition, mixed with a personal, sub-consciously jealous unwillingness that he should take her place in any way, that made her so reluctant, in the spring of 1868, to let him visit Ireland as her representative, shewing that she took an interest in that perturbed portion of her dominions. The country was riddled with Fenianism, but the Prince and his wife were as scornful of personal risks as she was herself and she opposed the visit for ridiculous reasons. She had a Viceroy there already : he represented her, and the question of precedence between them would be a very difficult problem. The programme included a visit to the Punchestown races : that would never do. He attended far too many race-meetings as it was. Had it not been for the advocacy of her new Prime-Minister Mr. Disraeli, who had succeeded Lord Derby on his retirement earlier in the year, she would probably not have permitted the visit at all. But Mr. Disraeli had already begun to establish himself with her, and, by careful observation, to learn how to manage her. He pointed out that for the last two centuries the Sovereign had only passed twenty-one days in Ireland, and that Ireland "yearned for the occasional presence and inspiration of Royalty." The inspiration of Royalty ! There for the first time, like some Oriental Pan in the thicket, he sounded that flute-like note which she found irresistible, and she consented to the visit. But she turned down with great emphasis Disraeli's further proposal that the Prince should take a house in Ireland later on for a month's hunting. Wales would expect him to reside there next. True, she herself resided in Scotland for several months in the year for rest and relaxation, but lots of people did that. Besides, in the Prince of Wales's case "*any encouragement*" of his constant love of running about, and

not keeping at home or near the Queen, is *most earnestly* and *seriously* to be deprecated." *

Disraeli had made a good beginning. This year he was Prime Minister for only ten months but the flute was seldom out of his mouth. Twice before, when he had been Chancellor of the Exchequer, she had found his despatches far more entertaining than the cut and dried communications of other Ministers, and he made them more seductive yet with deft adoring touches. She was his gracious Mistress : he compared the speakers of the Opposition "to a company, a *troupe*, like one of those bands of minstrels one encounters in the sauntering of a summer street . . . but with visages not so fair and radiant as the countenances of your Majesty's subjects at Balmoral." He never hinted that her long absences in her northern home were highly inconvenient : he only earnestly hoped "that the bright air of Balmoral, and your Majesty's serene life have at the same time strengthened and tranquillised a nervous system very sensitive and too much tried." How different was this comprehending sympathy from the odious cruelty of the Press, which in spite of her having held three Drawing Rooms, having spent a week in London and having laid the foundation-stone of St. Thomas's Hospital, all in the space of five months was "shameless" enough to complain of her seclusion ! She sent him a box of spring-flowers from Osborne and he told her that : "None of the decorations on which he sometimes has to take your Majesty's pleasure were half so fair." (The House very serene and about to die.) He rejoiced in her squeezing in an extra holiday in Switzerland before going to Balmoral for the autumn : all pending business could quite well wait for her return.

Then he was indefatigable in examining the merits of candidates for high ecclesiastical appointments, and though

* Letters, II, i, pp. 513, 514.

such subjects were new to him, he shewed great discernment, recommending, for instance, Dr. McNeile for the Deanery of Ripon on account of his "eloquent, learned and commanding advocacy of the Royal supremacy." He stayed at Balmoral in the autumn as Minister in attendance, and the Queen found him extremely agreeable and original, and they had great talks about preferment in the Church. She loaded him with gifts before he left : there were two volumes of views of Balmoral, a box full of family photographs, a full-length portrait of the Prince Consort, and a Scotch shawl for Mrs. Disraeli with a gracious message that the Queen hoped she would find it warm in the cold weather. His letter of thanks was most adroit : "though absent he will be able to live, as it were, in your Majesty's favourite scenes" : the portrait was of that gifted being on whom his memory could not dwell without emotion, and nothing could more deeply gratify him than the Queen's recollection of his wife. The mortality among high dignitaries of the Church that autumn was unusually high, and he continued to make the most careful investigations as to suitable successors, yielding, however, to her, as in the appointment of Bishop Tait of London to the Primacy, if she had really made up her mind. Then this romantic partnership came temporarily to an end, for the Government was heavily defeated at the General Election in November, and the Queen sent for Mr. Gladstone who became her Prime Minister for the first time.*

But Disraeli was well content with his achievements of the last ten months. Politically, his period of Office had been of the most barren, but he had laid the foundation of such relations to the Queen as no Prime Minister, not even Melbourne, the idol of her girlish adoration, had ever enjoyed yet. He betook himself to the writing of his almost

* Letters, II, i, pp. 529-560.

less fantastic romance, *Lothair*, and read pieces of it to the newly created Viscountess Beaconsfield who, in that severe winter, was keeping warm in her Scotch shawl. The careful student of that book may detect in it certain flowery phrases which the author used again in his future correspondence with his Sovereign.

CHAPTER XV

I

SIX years had now nearly elapsed since the marriage of the Prince of Wales in 1863, and the Queen's refusal to give him work or responsibilities that should occupy him grew inveterate. In this her practice was sharply at variance with her avowed principles, for she wrote to Mr. Gladstone *à propos* of Prince Arthur "The Queen is anxious to keep him employed as other young men, and above all not idling at home, exposed to the many temptations which beset all young men—but Princes more than any others." * The Prince of Wales's education, made up by the Prince Consort and Stockmar like a prescription to render him a replica of his father, had had, it might be said, precisely the opposite effect, and his mother realized that, for she sent the Crown Princess what might almost be considered a warning note about the upbringing of her William. "I often think too great care, too much constant watching leads to the very dangers hereafter which one wishes to avoid." Nor could the most fanatic believer in heredity trace any sort of natural resemblance between father and son. The Prince Consort was by taste and inclination a student and a lover of the Arts : his son never opened a book nor cared a jot about any form of Art except French comedy. The one regarded social intercourse as a relaxation when work was done but otherwise a waste of

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, p. 193.

time ; the other, as more enlightened folk had already seen, was a young man whose most valuable equipment was his social geniality and his power of gaining knowledge and experience not from books but from men. The Prince Consort's public manner was stiff and unspontaneous for the preservation of his dignity : his son did such duties as were permitted him with extreme jollity, as if there was nothing he liked more than opening an Institute or lunching with a Mayor, but he did not sacrifice his dignity thereby. In one point only could their characters be held to approximate : they both employed their energies to the utmost, but while the father wore himself out in his application to work, it seemed more likely that the son would wear himself out in his devotion to pleasure.

He made himself the centre of a circle of lively young men and pretty women, few of whom could possibly have been asked to Windsor while his father was alive. It is impossible to conjecture whether host or guests would have been the more disconcerted by each other, and the Queen was fully as averse from her son's friends as Albert would have been. Among them were young American ladies, and as yet socially for her America scarcely existed. And there were Jews among them : Jews as yet had no place in Society, but the Prince found them most agreeable, and from his earliest manhood until his death he made them his intimates. This Marlborough House set, as it came to be called, was responsible for much of the breaking-down of the traditional stiffness and exclusiveness of high circles of Victorian social life. So-called "Society" hitherto had been a small and select body, dignified in deportment, noble by birth, and profoundly snobbish in sentiment. Now, at the very head of it was a young man who asked of Society nothing further than that it should amuse him. Duchesses could be dull and plain, and he preferred something snap-

-pier. He liked race-meetings, he liked gambling, he liked entertaining shooting-parties at Sandringham and the practical jokes forbidden to his boyhood ; he liked running over to Paris for a few days, staying at the Hotel Bristol, attending the less puritanical French theatres and supping at restaurants. Most other young men of abundant money, lively spirits and unprudish dispositions, who were not permitted to have a profession would have behaved very much as he did, but he made a great mistake, from which his good sense should have saved him, in considering that his private diversions were nobody's affair but his own. He thought that he could toss his ostrich-feathers aside when he had finished opening a public library, and become invisible till it was time to pick them up again and lay a foundation stone. Six years of such deliberate hedonism had given rise to a good deal of scandal not alone in radical and anti-monarchist prints, but in respectable journals and in the minds of solid and influential people. It was wiser to ring down the curtain, and the idea that he and his wife should spend this winter of 1868-1869 abroad was opportunity. Though the Queen disliked his running about and not keeping near her, she willingly concurred, stipulating that she must approve the itinerary, that he must be incognito and only stay with near relations, for fear of foreign Sovereigns proposing to visit her, and that Sunday must be observed in the English mode : Church and no shooting.

They spent six Christmas weeks at Copenhagen, and then in thoroughly Danish mood a couple of days with the Crown Prince of Prussia, where the Prince of Wales—the incognito wearing a little thin—was ceremoniously invested with the Black Eagle : Bismarck with sarcastic intention wore a Danish Order as a pretty compliment to the Princess of Wales whose father he had robbed of the Duchies, to show he bore no malice. They crossed to Egypt

where the Khedive Ismail treated them very magnificently in return for the meagre hospitality he had received in England eighteen months ago, and shewed them that remarkable ditch, now nearly completed, which was dug across the desert from Port Said to the Gulf of Suez. They visited Sultan Abdul Aziz K.G. at Constantinople where the incognito was dropped altogether, and he entertained for the first time a male and female dinner-party of mixed Mohammedans and infidels. A week in Paris where for the last time they saw the court of Emperor Napoleon in full brilliance finished the seven months' tour, and the Marlborough House set were very pleased to see their leader again.

Meantime at home the Queen was acquainting herself with the volcanic energy of her new Prime Minister. Hitherto their contacts had been propitious. The main passport to her favour was still the approval of the Prince Consort who had thought very highly of his abilities, and shared his scholarly tastes. Moreover at the Prince's death Gladstone had seemed to understand better than anybody what the Queen's bereavement was to her, and his speech, at Manchester had called forth from her one of her most intimate and desolated letters. She had offered him the loan of Abergeldie, close to Balmoral, for the benefit which the bracing Scotch air would give him, and now when he took Office she confided to him her perturbations about the Prince of Wales. Certainly there was an important political point on which they profoundly disagreed, namely Gladstone's Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church, but the Queen knowing that it must inevitably pass the House of Commons made no polemic over that, but devoted herself to preventing any serious conflict with the House of Lords. She also acquiesced in the return of Lord Clarendon to the Foreign Office, an appointment which she

much disliked : in a word, she shewed the utmost good-will to her new Prime Minister.

These amiable intentions were cordially reciprocated. Dean Wellesley of Windsor had been giving Gladstone very sagacious coaching about his manner to the Queen : her nervous susceptibilities must be treated with gentleness, even with tenderness, and Gladstone had replied in the most knightly tone : "Every motive of duty, feeling and interest that can touch a man should bind me to study to the best of my small power the manner of my relations with H.M. She is a woman, a widow, a lover of truth, a Sovereign, a benefactress to her country. What titles !"

They were indeed. But was the very emphasis and earnestness of his tribute a symptom of a certain ponderousness ? She had been accustomed of late to a leaven of wit and fantasy that turned the solid dough of official business into the lightest of confections. But lightness was not among Mr. Gladstone's qualities : had he not failed to see one of Albert's best jokes ? The Prince had humorously suggested making a military barracks of Burlington House, and Gladstone found three conclusive reasons against it : the Prince had to explain that he was being funny. Or again, Edward Burne-Jones once gaily told him that 801,926 birds roosted nightly in a tree in his garden, and Gladstone asked with astonishment, "How many birds did you say ?" * . . .

Certainly there was nothing of leaven or lightness in the first piece of legislature which he submitted to the Queen, namely the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Irish Church. To make it easier he sent her two preliminary papers (i) "on the general policy and effect of the measure" (ii) "A dry recital of the purport of what would be the leading clauses of the Bill." If she would previously study

* Guedalla, i, pp. 48, 108. Memorials of E. Burne-Jones, i, p. 133.

these she would be able, when he came to Osborne, to grasp the draft of the Bill which he proposed to submit to the Cabinet. But these preliminary papers completely floored her. She asked Mr. Theodore Martin to turn from the Life of the Prince Consort and analyse them for her. Mr. Martin was puzzled, too, and thought it only natural that she should have lost her way in such a fog, and even when he had done his best to disperse it, there were some thick patches left, and she had to enquire of her Prime Minister about these nebulous remnants. He replied to her under six carefully reasoned heads.* She could hardly help feeling that Mr. Disraeli would have explained it all in a less exhausting manner.

Evidently Mr. Gladstone was intending to work her very much harder than her late Prime Minister, and in self-defence she impressed on him the precarious state of her health, her fits of exhaustion, the absolute necessity for her having long periods of "*comparative rest*" at Osborne and Balmoral, however desirable it was that she should be more accessible. "*Complete rest*" she told him, "the Queen (perhaps the *only person* who cannot do so) *never has*." Again and again her physician Sir William Jenner was instructed to write to or to interview Gladstone in order to convince him on this point. Unfortunately General Grey, the Queen's private secretary, was not of the same mind as she. He begged Gladstone to insist on a larger performance of her public duties, for he was sure her supposed ill-health was quite an illusion, and before Gladstone had been in office six months he also took this view, and wrote to General Grey, putting the blame on her doctor: "Fanciful ideas of a woman about her own health, encouraged by a feeble-minded doctor become realities to (the) effect of producing in a considerable degree the in-

* Letters, II, i, pp. 577-583.

-capacity which but for them would not exist." * As usual she was at Balmoral in June, and he began to worry her over several projects in a way that called forth bitter protests. The Khedive Ismail, who had gorgeously entertained the Prince and Princess of Wales for two months in Egypt, was coming to England : would she provide quarters for him at Buckingham Palace ? Yes : she would even ask him to Windsor for one night, if he was not stopping long and had not a large suite. But she must "*strongly protest against* the pretension raised that she should at her *own expense*, in the *only Palace* of her own . . . entertain all Foreign Potentates who *chose* to come here for their own amusement." This idea of beginning to entertain Foreign Potentates again, opened frightful prospects : apart from the expense she was incapable of it. Rest, more and more rest was what she required and her bad handwriting was due to the agitation this proposal had caused her.†

This was an unfortunate beginning to Mr. Gladstone's efforts, which he thought it his duty to make, in order to induce her to emerge further from her retirement. Would she put off her return to Balmoral in the middle of August should a political crisis arise, and would she, before that, open the new bridge at Blackfriars ? He gave her four excellent reasons for doing so : (i) Her Uncle King William had opened London Bridge, the last bridge built over the Thames, (ii) The public would be very much pleased, (iii) The ceremony would be short and not fatiguing, (iv) She would see some interesting public works which were new to her : viz. the Embankment, the Viaduct and the curious underground Railway. Impossible. The fatigue and the excitement and the heat would be far too great. As for delaying her return to Balmoral in August

* Guedalla, i, pp. 158, 184.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 174-176.

(where she still was in June) she would put it off, if there was urgent cause, for two or three days.

That, she thought, ought to have been the end of these urgings, but it was not. Mr. Gladstone felt it his duty to write to her about the inconvenience of her being at Balmoral, six hundred miles away, while Parliament was still sitting, and, referring again to Blackfriars Bridge, told her that the public appearance of the Sovereign from time to time was "among the substantial and even indispensable means of maintaining the full influence of the Monarchy," and that the occupant of the Throne of the British Empire must make the "special and heavy sacrifices," which that august position demanded.* This was of the nature of a lecture, and she did not care about being lectured. She told him quite plainly that she could do her duty (and had done so for thirty-two years of her reign) wherever she was. As for the bridge, it was quite impossible, as she had already said, that she could undertake that ceremony in the heat of the summer, and reminded him that during the last five months she had held Drawing Rooms and a Levée, had gone to the opening of the Royal Academy and was going to give a breakfast (i. e. an afternoon tea) to the Khedive Ismail at Buckingham Palace.

Gladstone's sense of duty still urged him to persevere. . . It was most important that she should not go to Osborne till a critical period in the Irish Bill, July 15th-20th, was passed. It was no use asking her to be in London, but could she manage to remain at Windsor for those days, so that her Ministers could rush down to see her between the sitting of one day and that of the next? Naturally her neurasthenia exulted in an opportunity to assert itself, and she told him that only a "*very* uncommon crisis in public affairs" would induce her to undergo "so serious a trial to

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, p. 182.

her strength as a longer residence away from the sea at *this time of year.*" But she consented, though with a very solemn warning. "She must ask Mr. Gladstone to *bear in mind* that this *must* be regarded as an *entirely isolated case*, and that it must NEVER be made a *precedent* for any *similar* representation on the part of her Ministers to her in succeeding years." In other words whatever future crisis might arise, she must not be again asked to delay her departure to Osborne or Balmoral beyond the day she had fixed. As for Gladstone's proposal that she should confer a peerage on Baron Sir Lionel Rothschild, who had represented the City of London in the House of Commons for twenty-two years, all argument was useless. He had acquired his immense wealth — of which he was most munificent — in contracts and loans to Foreign Governments and in speculations on the Stock Exchange which to her were a species of gambling on a vast scale : possibly also the Prince of Wales's intimacy with Jews was a consideration against it. . . But she steeled herself to open the bridge in the autumn, and then for a couple of months sent Gladstone a series of increasingly grave reports from Osborne about her health, for the opening of Parliament in February 1870 was approaching. She had intended to make the effort, but feared she might be unable to, owing to the neuralgia which had been bothering her for the last year and a half. Ten days before the date she found it to be "*totally out of the question* that the Queen CLD. undertake it . . . it would be *madness.*" *

Throughout this first year then of Gladstone's first Administration, there had been endless points of disagreement — some very insignificant — between him and the Queen, which promised an abundant fructification. In public business the Irish Disestablishment Bill had been passed, of

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, pp. 178–218. Letters, II, i, pp. 600–630.

which she thoroughly disapproved, and in the next two years the Irish Land Bill and the Army Regulation Bill were to follow. The reforming policy of the party was antagonistic to her, and perhaps, in the whole possible course of legislature, there was only one point over which they were in sympathy, which was 'what the Queen termed the "so-called and most erroneous 'Rights of Women.'" Even there their sympathy was not of the same quality, for while Mr. Gladstone based his objection on the primitive ideas of Christendom on that great subject, the Queen was entirely indifferent to Christendom and merely had the strongest personal dislike to the monstrous impropriety. And underlying these political divergencies there was a very potent factor for the making of discord. The Queen was beginning not to like him personally, and she was always prone to let her personal feelings cloud her judgment. Such feelings could change : she had begun, for instance, by thoroughly disliking Sir Robert Peel and had ended by deeming him among her 'greatest friends : time was also when her late Prime Minister had been "that detestable Mr. D'Israeli." But in the old days there had been Albert to guide her judgment and moderate her prejudices, and now there was no-one except, to some extent, General Grey, and he, had the Queen but known it, was a traitor in the camp, often urging Gladstone to hustle her further out of the seclusion from which she had already begun to emerge. Though the Prime Minister's manner to her was most deferential, she did not like to be told that her public appearances were indispensable in maintaining the loyalty and devotion of her subjects. He was too insistent, though always with expressions of deepest respect, and he was too pertinacious. If she said she was too unwell to perform some function which he considered part of her duty, he was not clever with her, but made another frontal attack. His verbal vehemence

and his epistolary prolixity exhausted and bored her, and though on this occasion or that she might yield, she was hardening herself against him. His intense earnestness precluded deftness in his dealings with her ; he did not believe in her physical disabilities, and very soon, in spite of her assertions that she was wearing herself out in the service of her country, he grew convinced that she had not very much to do, and was by no means overworked. Her long and constant periods of retreat at Osborne and Ball-moral not only occasioning the greatest inconvenience to her Ministers but dislocation in critical times of the machinery of the State were, in his opinion, totally unwarranted on the score of her health, and her fancied incapacity, backed up by the feeble-minded Jenner, had no real existence. Such dissonances, faintly but unmistakably audible in this first year of Gladstone's ministry, were not likely to be resolved into harmony.

II

ABROAD, Bismarck was ready for war again, and with his usual astuteness made it appear that Germany was dragged into it, like a lamb driven, helplessly bleating, to the butcher's. The gambit he chose was the succession to the Spanish throne, for in the autumn of 1868 the nymphomaniac Queen Isabella had been deposed, and Spain, though she had five children, still lacked a monarch. In March 1870 Bismarck thought the time was ripe, and secretly prompted Marshal Prim, the head of the Spanish republican government, to ask the King of Prussia to nominate Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen for the throne. The Royal Family of Prussia were not keen about it, but Bismarck wrought upon them and early in July, when the offer was renewed, Prince Leopold accepted it for himself, and the

King of Prussia, as head of the Family, gave his consent. Instantly France flared up, declaring that she would go to war sooner than allow Germany to nominate a Hohenzollern King for Spain, and Prince Leopold withdrew. Then France made one of those mistakes by which Bismarck was always quick to profit, and through her Ambassador at Berlin she demanded of the King of Prussia that he should personally promise not to renew this nomination. Such a demand exceeded all diplomatic usage, and it was quite impossible that the King should comply with it. Bismarck pounced on this indiscretion and published such inflammatory accounts of it that France declared war on July 19, 1870.*

The Queen's sympathies were entirely with Germany, and, strange as it seems, she was torn with anxiety for her fate. She believed that France was overwhelmingly strong in the field, and that Germany was unprepared, but both she and the Crown Princess who shared her fears might have relaxed their habitual distrust of Bismarck as to that. She remembered the Prince Consort's view in those almost incredible days of her fascination with the Emperor Napoleon, that France was "a vainglorious and immoral nation" and how right he was! She remembered his constant aspirations for a strong Germany with whom England should be knit in firm bonds of friendship and mutual interests, and quite forgot that the Germany of his dreams, philosophical, artistic, peace-loving Germany, was the very antipodes of the Germany which Bismarck had forged. "Words are too weak" she wrote to her daughter "to say *all* I feel for you, or what I think of my neighbours. We must be neutral *as long as* we can, but no-one here conceals their opinion as to the extreme iniquity of the war. Still, *more*,

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 2, 22, 23. Letters of Empress Frederick, pp. 71-73. Lee, Edward VII, pp. 301-303.

publicly, we cannot say, but the feeling of the people and country here is all with you, which it was not *before*. And need I say what I feel ?” . . .* Clearly then the Queen thought it quite possible that England would presently enter the war on the side of Germany, and certainly Germany had been counting on England’s support. A letter from the Crown Princess to her mother defined the bitterness felt there at England’s neutrality: “If we are annihilated, England will be the cause, she knows and acknowledges that we have been unfairly and unjustly attacked, and yet she will quietly see us go to the bottom without stirring a little finger to help us ! If she would but speak out loud to our neighbour and threaten to strike him who disturbed the peace of Europe, France would *never* have *dared* to make war, and all these lives would have been saved. England is suffering from obesity and too indolent to stir. . .”†

These apprehensions did not last long, for throughout August the tide of German victories flowed swiftly. The Queen was up at Balmoral, the Prince of Wales at Abergeldie, and family relations must have been sadly strained, for his personal sympathies were entirely with the French, and neither he nor his wife had forgotten how Prussia had trampled on Denmark. The Queen still distrusted his discretion, for there was a story going the rounds at Berlin that, dining at the French Embassy soon after the outbreak of war, he had said that he hoped Prussia would be defeated, and that he had told the Austrian Ambassador that he was delighted to hear that Austria was coming in on the French side. He denied having said anything of the sort, and the Queen fully accepted that, but she wanted him to keep quiet, and had no encouragement for his eagerness

* Letters of Empress Frederick, 77.

† Letters, II, ii, pp. 52, 80.

to act on her behalf as mediator between the Emperor and the King of Prussia in order to bring the war to a close. No intervention could have been of the smallest use, but he must have felt the growing jubilation of his sister's letters hard to bear, especially when she said, "I am sure dear Bertie must envy Fritz who has such a trying, but such a useful life." As if he did not want to have a useful life, too ! *

On September 1 came the huge disaster to France, when at Sedan MacMahon's army surrendered, and the Emperor was taken prisoner. Paean of triumph and exultant moralisings poured from the Crown Princess. "Such a downfall," she wrote, "is a melancholy thing, but it is meant to teach deep lessons ! May we all learn what frivolity, conceit and immorality lead to ! The French people have trusted in their own excellence, have completely deceived themselves. Where is their army ? Where are their statesmen ? They despised and hated the Germans, whom they considered it quite lawful to insult. How they have been punished ! . . . What will Bertie and Alix say to all these marvellous events ? . . . Ancient history teaches the same lesson as modern history — a hard and stern one for those who have to learn it by sad experience. The poor Emperor has leisure now to study it."

Cordially did the Queen agree with these high sentiments, for surely here was the voice of Albert himself, his *ipsissima verba*, just what he had said to her when she had been so dazzled by the brilliance of Paris. Dr. Macleod, an old and trusted friend, preached a splendid sermon to the same effect at kirk and the Queen thought the chapter he read (Isaiah XXVIII) "Woe to the crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim whose glorious beauty is a fading flower" described France quite wonderfully.†

* Letters of Empress Frederick, pp. 76, 89.

† Letters, II, ii, pp. 59, 61-63. More Leaves, p. 151.

National sympathy had been with Germany when the war broke out, for France had certainly precipitated it, and the public knew nothing of Bismarck's careful fanning of the flame. But the siege of Paris which followed and the inexorably severe terms of peace caused a strong reaction towards France and against the avowed German proclivities of the Queen, who, it was thought, might have saved France from the full bitterness of her humiliation by a personal appeal to her German relations. As a matter of fact she had written to the King of Prussia, appealing to his magnanimity not to ask from France terms that she could not accept, and she was certainly right in not attempting more for fear, as she had said, that Germany might construe it into a desire to rob her of the fruits of victory. The Prince of Wales was included in this accusation of excessive Germanism, which was surely most unjust since his sympathies were entirely with the French. This feeling against them was heightened by the rumour that, when Paris surrendered, both he and his mother sent congratulatory messages on the result of the war to the Crown Prince. That they communicated with him through the Queen's Messenger to the Embassy at Paris was true, but these communications were such as it was perfectly proper for them to send to so near a connection, and were in no way a breach of neutrality. The Press took the matter up, and the Queen's German sympathies, together with the establishment of the French Republic led to an ugly spread of revolutionary republicanism in England. Republican clubs were started in many large towns, where advanced Radicals, among them Charles Bradlaugh, held forth to enthusiastic audiences, and Mr. Gladstone and other members of the Cabinet made no secret of their serious apprehensions for the stability of the Throne.

There were contributory causes as well. One was the increasing dissatisfaction with the conduct of what the

Prince of Wales considered his private life. Last year (1870) that private life had emerged into a very disagreeable publicity. Sir Charles Mordaunt brought an action for divorce against his wife, now insane, citing as co-respondents two intimate friends of the Prince, and alleging that his wife had confessed to misconduct with him. The Prince was subpoenaed, he denied the accusation altogether, and the letters he had written Lady Mordaunt, read by the Judge, were found to contain nothing that in the remotest degree supported the allegation. But, though he was declared to be innocent, his association with such a case inevitably produced a boiling-up of the gossip concerning his general mode of life, his gambling, his racing, his amiable susceptibilities to female charms, and the unedifying character of the Marlborough House set, and next time that he appeared at a race-meeting he was hissed. Now, in this republican agitation, all this was brought up again. His official income derived from the Government annuity which he had been given at his marriage and the revenues of the Duchy of Cornwall amounted to over £100,000, and he was supposed to be heavily in debt as well. The heir to the throne was expensive and unedifying.

Then there was the present occupant of the throne, and her secluded privacy and her great unwillingness to perform the duties of a Sovereign was an even apter text for republicans than the excessive publicity of her son. This year she opened Parliament in person for the third time since her widowhood, but the good effect that might conceivably have had was neutralized by the request for a dowry of £30,000 and an annuity of £6000 for her daughter Princess Louise on her approaching marriage with the Marquis of Lorne, and, a few months afterwards, for an annuity of £15,000 a year for her son Prince Arthur, on his coming of age. No-one could forget that five years before, on one

of those very rare occasions when the Queen's shattered nerves permitted her to open Parliament, her appearance had been accompanied by similar requests for Princess Helena and Prince Alfred, and it was little wonder that republican statisticians began to do arithmetic sums in vast but simple addition. On her accession the Queen had been allotted the revenues derived from the Duchy of Lancaster, which had since then increased in value by at least 100%, and a grant of £385,000 a year. In addition to these national emoluments she had been left a fortune of half a million by John Camden Neild, in 1852, and at the death of the Prince Consort had come into his private fortune which was reputed to be no less substantial. The fabric of Windsor and Buckingham Palace was kept up by the nation, so also was the upkeep of the Royal Yacht. It was argued therefore that if during those years of her marriage the Queen could entertain largely and buy two big estates out of income, her savings during the secluded years of her widowhood must have been enormous, and that she was amassing a very large fortune out of the money granted her to maintain the dignity and splendour of the Crown. Against these attacks Gladstone defended her with all the eloquent vehemence which she had often before found so fatiguing. The Queen's income, he thundered forth, had been granted her by the nation, and it was at her disposal to spend as she chose. As for the grants for her children on their coming of age or marrying there was ample precedent, and his loyal advocacy carried his party with him.

The Queen regarded this agitation as a most unwarrantable intrusion into her private affairs and passionately resented it. As if to challenge these trespassers to dare to interfere with her further, she gave them another opportunity of doing so. With the present feeling in the country running so high against the harshness of Germany's terms

to France, which many believed she might have mitigated, and against her own pro-German sympathies, it was important that no fresh cause for irritation should arise. But no-one, she was determined, should dictate to her about family matters, and she asked the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany with their two sons to pay her a long visit. She could not have her children, Bertie and Vicky and Fritz at loggerheads, and she wished them all to meet under her roof at Osborne and make an end of this disagreeable quarrelling. It would have been impossible to challenge public opinion more successfully: there were questions asked in the House about it, the press teemed with articles which she considered vulgar and impertinent, but that made no difference at all to her. Let these meddlesome people think it over, and they would see that she was a widowed lady, the head of her family, and she claimed the right to do as any other widowed lady, Queen or not, would have done. Gladstone, with his invariable personal devotion to her, publicly defended this mother-attitude in the House, and in private this visit, which most mothers would have postponed till her children had cooled down a little, was a complete success, and that for a reason which no-one could have anticipated.

Bismarck had wrought wonderfully for Prussia: when Fritz's father had come to the Throne, he was King only of one German state among many, but when Fritz succeeded he would be Emperor of united Germany, with two Duchies snatched from Denmark and two provinces from France thrown in. But in spite of these great aggrandisements, which made Prussia a power far exceeding anything of which Albert had dreamed, all four of them, the Queen and her children and son-in-law, at heart detested Bismarck and his iron policies, regarding him as a ruthless foe to peace. So harmonious were these anti-Bismarck

sentiments, and so accordant their views about his territorial grabbings that the Prince of Wales believed that his brother-in-law, when he succeeded, would be in favour of returning Alsace and Lorraine to France.

As for the Prince himself, there was a foreshadowing of a change in his mother's reluctance to give him employment. A few years ago she had, even though the suggestion had been Disraeli's, absolutely refused to let him reside for a part of the year in Ireland, for the sake of the "Inspiration of Royalty." Now she discussed with Gladstone the possibility of making him non-political Lord Lieutenant with residence there for three or four months.* More significant yet was an entry she made in her Journal: "Bertie remained for the Investiture. After '61 I could hardly bear the thought of anyone helping me and standing where my dearest one had always stood, but as years go on I strongly feel that to lift up my son and heir and keep him in his place near me, is only what is right."†

These republican agitations had been very ugly; they had got on the Queen's nerves, and perhaps it was unwise of Gladstone to ask her to do anything just then which she was certain to make a fuss about. But he was much concerned about the unrest to which her great reluctance to appear at public State functions was a contributing cause, and with an infinite variety of loyal expressions he asked her to delay her departure for Balmoral till Parliament was prorogued, clearly hinting that it would be an excellent thing if she prorogued it in person. The Commons had just passed Prince Arthur's annuity, but without cordiality, and had expressed a wish that the Queen would show herself more; such an act of "grace and condescension" would be much appreciated. She did not answer him at all, but

* Letters, II, ii, p. 138.

† *Ibid.*, p. 140.

conveyed her high and almost incoherent displeasure with him through her Lord Chancellor Hatherley. Her indignation against this attempted trespass on her holiday took the form of a very grave remonstrance, next door to an ultimatum, as if a Foreign Power had encroached on the territory of her dominions. She wrote:

"The Queen feels sure that if she goes beyond a certain limit now she will be teased and tormented every year and probably prevented (or at least it will be attempted) from doing what for her health which as she grows older and as the long wear and tear of hard work, unceasing anxiety and responsibility must tell more and more upon her will be more and more necessary. . ." This premised, she said she would wait three days after her intended departure in case Parliament could finish its business by then, but if it was clear by to-morrow that it could not, she would stick to her original date. The letter concluded with a menacing peroration, the energetic vehemence of which showed that she knew, *au fond*, that she was defending the indefensible. She wrote:

"What killed her Beloved Husband ? Overwork and worry — what killed Lord Clarendon ? The same. What has broken down Mr. Bright and Mr. Childers and made them retire, but the same ; and the Queen a woman no longer young is supposed to be proof against all and to be driven and abused till her nerves and health will give way with the worry and agitation and interference in her private life.

"She must solemnly repeat that unless her Ministers support her and state the whole truth she cannot go on and must give her heavy burden up to other hands." *

Twice more Gladstone wrote to her, but received no reply to either letter, and the Queen went up to Balmoral according to plan with the Crown Princess and her two

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, pp. 298-300.

grandchildren. Believing as he did, and with good cause, that these Republican agitations all over England threatened the stability of the Monarchy, and that the Queen's more frequent appearances would certainly strengthen it, it was little wonder that he found her refusal to sacrifice her own convenience a very disheartening business. He would also have been more than human not to have resented her rudeness in sending no direct reply to the communications of her Prime Minister, but in savagely commenting on them to another officer of State. He wrote to Colonel Ponsonby, who had become her private secretary on the death of General Grey: "Smaller and meaner cause for the decay of thrones cannot be conceived. It is like the worm which bores the bark of a noble oak tree and so breaks the channel of its life." *

Unfortunately Balmoral did not produce its usual bracing and tranquillising effect. The Queen suffered from an abscess in her arm, then from acute rheumatism, which caused her very severe pain, and the Journal was a tissue of detailed woes. But perhaps, she thought, good was coming out of these afflictions for since she had been ill the press seemed to show contrition for its abuse of her. But it was hard to go through such suffering, which she attributed to worry and overwork, before people would see how cruelly they had misunderstood her.†

Gladstone came up to Balmoral in September, as Minister in Waiting, but it was several days before she saw him at all. Even when she did, she was not up to talking much, but before he left she wrote him two long letters. The second of them concerned the Army: how exactly, under this new constitution, would the Commander-in-Chief stand in relation to the Secretary of State for War? Parliament

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, p. 304.

† Letters, II, ii, pp. 157-161. Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 413.

must not be allowed to interfere with the executive side : she would deprecate in the strongest manner any civil control of discipline in the Army. The Commander-in-Chief, whether her cousin the Duke of Cambridge or his successor, must remain the Head of the Army, undiminished in importance and authority. . . A most sensible acute letter, raising points that really required definition. But the subject of her first letter was truly surprising. Arctic explorers, the Queen wrote, men who had saved life at sea, non-commissioned officers, men who had shewn bravery on the field all received medals for their exploits. But "there were other services in their way *equally valuable, meritorious and indeed important* and those are : *personal, devoted and faithful* services to the Sovereign, which pass by without any distinctive badge." She proposed therefore to give her domestic servants of long service a small medal, and — this was why she consulted her Prime Minister — she hoped the Treasury would bear the expense : such a small sum ! It was indeed : a few ounces of silver and a yard of ribbon would last a long time, but one can clearly see the workings of the Queen's mind over what appears so ludicrous. No matter what agitation had been raised about her own immense income from the State and her private enrichment from it, the expenses of this new decoration, like every other, ought not to be borne by the Sovereign.

Mr. Gladstone went into the matter with Colonel Ponsonby, and his answer to the Queen was of consummate tact : he thought it would be wiser not to ask the House of Commons for a grant, for that would give the Government a voice in the bestowal of this distinction, and he thought there would be no difficulty about the expense.* But we may permit him a smile of private satisfaction over this really beautiful reply, for presently Sir Charles Dilke made

* Guedalla, i, pp. 305-307.

a most violent republican speech at Newcastle with special reference to the Civil List, paid by the nation to the Queen, and to the grants she asked for her children. Loyally had Gladstone defended her over those. But could he in his next budget without giving a handle for derision have asked for a few pounds to supply medals to gillies and dressers and housemaids at Balmoral ?

This speech of Sir Charles Dilke's caused the republican agitation to boil up again in a very menacing manner, but Providence intervened. The Prince of Wales after celebrating his birthday in November fell ill of typhoid fever, and for the first fortnight of December he lay between life and death. One day the bulletins held out hope : on the next there was a relapse, and all that could be said was that he was still alive. Instantly the squalls of republicanism were stilled, the Queen and her heir ceased to exist as such and became a mother — any mother — watching by the bed of her son. To her the suspense was doubly dreadful, for each day brought nearer the anniversary of December 14 when ten years before the Prince Consort died of that same deadly fever and she felt almost sure that that dread day would rob her also of her son. Instead he took a decided turn for the better, and the country rejoiced over his convalescence with the same sincerity as it had followed his illness. The situation remained precisely the same as before with a withdrawn and expensive Queen and a hedonistic and expensive heir, but that deep-rooted sentimentalism, characteristic of the English, decided that the slate was wiped clean by all that they had been through. When next in the House of Commons Sir Charles Dilke proposed an audit into the Queen's accounts he found himself in a minority of four to nearly three hundred. The Prince's illness had literally given its death-blow to republicanism.

The Queen consented, though unwillingly, to attend a

service of thanksgiving at St. Paul's for the Prince's recovery, if her health permitted, and, coupled with her consent, assumed that, after this, she should not be asked to open the Parliamentary session of 1872. Her health permitted and at the thanksgiving service on February 27, there was a tremendous demonstration of loyalty and enthusiasm. As always happened when she could bring herself to emerge, she was immensely touched and gratified, and two days afterwards, of her own initiative, she drove through the Parks. Just as she was about to get out at the garden-gate of Buckingham Palace on her return, a boy called Arthur O'Connor came close up to the carriage door and pointed a pistol at her. John Brown jumped down from the rumble and seized him. Though the pistol was unloaded, she attributed her safety to him, for the pistol might have been loaded. This attempt caused a renewal of the demonstrations of loyalty, and for the third time in the same week she drove out, through crowded streets, standing up in her carriage for a while and acknowledging the roars of cheering that accompanied her. Once again it looked as if the long twilight of her retirement was finally lifting.*

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 193-200.

CHAPTER XVI

GLADSTONE fully realised the fresh start that the Prince of Wales's illness had given him, and that he should now be employed at some post that would give him occupation and curtail his exuberant leisure was most important for the stabilization of the Throne. He resumed the discussion he had held with the Queen, which she had promised to think over, about his being appointed non-political Viceroy in Ireland, and sent her a portentous memorandum of about 3500 words, far the longest communication, it may safely be stated, that any Prime Minister had ever submitted to her. As preamble he suggested that the Prince should be furnished with despatches from the Foreign Office, which might rouse his interest in international relations; or he might be associated with the India Office. But such employment would be only sporadic, and something more solid was required. He filled in with a profusion of detail the scheme already outlined. It comprised the abolition of the Viceroy, whose tenure was political, and the appointment of the non-political heir to the Throne, with a Minister for Ireland, having a seat in the Cabinet. This office, thought Gladstone, would vastly increase the Prince's moral and social influence in London, and since he would reside in Ireland only during the winter months, he and his peerless wife could be in London to relieve his mother of those Court ceremonial duties in the summer, which, as she had repeatedly said, her health and

her long absences at Balmoral and Osborne, did not permit her to undertake. In this carefully reasoned discourse he alluded to this inability in a most sympathetic manner, and cried "Peccavi" over his previous attempts to urge her. He had learned his lesson and would not forget it : for the future the Prince of Wales would act for her. Her remote residences would no longer be a cause of regret to her Ministers, for the Prince would perform her Metropolitan functions. Gladstone hoped she would graciously excuse his prolixity on the ground of his anxiety for the well being of the Throne.*

This weighty document, with its sonorous and classical periods flabbergasted the Queen, and Colonel Ponsonby had to reply to it, for she was too busy. She disagreed with every single point that her Prime Minister had raised, and with none more heartily than his suggestion that she was not equal to the Social calls of Monarchy — witness her record for the past year ! As for the main point she thought that (i) the Prince would refuse to spend five months in Ireland every year ; (ii) he would have neither patronage nor political power if a Cabinet Minister for Ireland replaced the Viceroy, and so such a suggestion was mere juggling ; (iii) his moral influence in London would not be increased if he was made Viceroy in Ireland, and (iv) the nature of that influence was a family matter between herself and him. *Finis*.

Naturally, Gladstone's superb conscientiousness did not allow that it was "Finis" at all. In answer to a further document, the Queen, after an interview with her son, reported that he would not consent to any such scheme, and hoped that her Prime Minister would consider it "*definitely* abandoned." He replied with a "Plan of Life" for the Prince, and in this enclosure, under six paragraphed heads repeated

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, i, pp. 351-358.

his arguments with certain modifications. The Queen thought it useless to prolong the discussion about Ireland, but thought that something might be found for her son in the India Office : perhaps Mr. Gladstone would consult not her, but his colleagues about that. . . Then came another rift in the already debilitated lute. She asked him to come to Balmoral, and he replied that, as matters stood, perhaps she did not really desire to see him. She most cordially answered that she hoped he would not "put himself to the inconvenience and fatigue" of coming there. The discussion had already lasted three and a half months, and, abruptly changing the subject, the Queen wrote to him about the horrible condition of the Railway services to Scotland, which she "*was perfectly determined to insist*" should meet with the "most serious consideration of the Government." And she much disliked Baron Ernest Stockmar's memoir of his admirable father — had Mr. Gladstone read it ? — and she could not possibly open Parliament in the ensuing Spring. . . Anything to stop the Prime Minister from hammering on about Bertie and Ireland.

But certainly the Queen's nervous malaise and the natural causes of it were yielding before her increased vitality. Early in 1873 she went to see the lately-widowed Empress Eugénie at Chislehurst, she stayed at Buckingham Palace for a night, she drove down to the East end of London and opened the Victoria Park, and in June the Shah of Persia came to England and stayed for a fortnight at Buckingham Palace. His visit was of high political significance, for Russia's expansions in Asia rendered it very desirable that Anglo-Persian relations should be cordial : while amity between Russia and England, it was hoped, would be warmed up by the engagement of Prince Alfred, Duke of Edinburgh, to the Grand Duchess Marie, only daughter of Tsar Alexander II and sister to the Tsarevitch. By a clever plan the

Tsarevitch and his wife, sister of the Princess of Wales, were staying with the Prince at Marlborough House while the Shah was at Buckingham Palace; Russia and Persia were thus being welcomed in England simultaneously. The very day after the Shah's arrival, June 20, the anniversary of the Queen's accession, she received him in full state at Windsor, and the gusto of her account in her Journal once more proved how thoroughly she enjoyed State functions when she could screw herself up to them. She wore her large pearls, but the splendours of these must have been somewhat dimmed by the Shah's jewels, huge rubies were the buttons of his coat which was covered with diamonds, and his sword-belt and epaulettes consisted of diamonds and enormous emeralds. The two, surrounded by Persian and English Princes and Princesses, all standing, sat side by side in the middle of the White Drawing-room ("very absurd it must have looked," wrote the Queen, "and I felt very shy") and she invested him with the Garter and kissed him. In return he invested her with two Orders, one of which he had invented just before he left Persia, and her cap was in danger of coming off, but the Grand Vizier, Princess Christian and Princess Louise came to its rescue. They sat down to lunch to the skirl of Highland pipers, and the Shah told her that he had caused her "Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands" to be translated into Persian and that he had read it. He lunched on fruit and quantities of iced water, and then went to have a rest attended by his Pipe-bearer and Cup-bearer. When he appeared again he had taken off his diamond aigrette and put on his spectacles. Not a word of wailing was there now about the impossibility of entertaining Royalty without the support of the Prince Consort: on another day she took him to a Military Review, and on their third meeting, they exchanged photographs and he was taken to the Mausoleum. . . How about

Mr. Gladstone's complaints that she would not perform the decorative functions of a Monarch ? *

Meanwhile the Liberal Government was running down like an unwound musical box. It had been defeated in March 1873 on the Irish University Bill, and Gladstone re-signed. The Queen sent for Disraeli but he was far too clever to take Office with a minority in the House of Commons ; it was wiser to let the musical box go sadly on, getting slower and slower until the whole country was sick to death of its melancholy tinkling. This agreeable result followed early in 1874, and at the General Elections the Conservatives won a substantial majority over Liberals and Irish Home Rulers combined. Once more, and not in vain, Disraeli was sent for, and became Prime Minister for the second time.

To the Queen the change was like passing, after a most uncomfortable voyage over choppy seas, into a sheltered harbour festooned with bunting and mottoes. Her relief from the rolling and pitching was so great that her parting from Gladstone was unnaturally cordial, and it might be augured that she would find it difficult to keep that up if ever in the future she would have to say "Hail" to him again instead of "Farewell." They talked of the reasons for this smashing defeat, and she recorded that she politely refrained from telling him "that it was greatly owing to his own unpopularity, and to the want of confidence people had in him," but that was what she thought. She offered him a peerage which she knew he would refuse, and when he said he would like to retire from politics altogether, she said he could not decide that at once. Then, as so often happened afterwards, they drifted into general conversation. Politics was the one subject about which she disliked talking to her Ex-Prime Minister. But how different was

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 258-261. Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 424.

the cordiality which marked her preliminary interview with her new Prime Minister. "He repeatedly said *whatever I wished SHOULD be done*. . . He knelt down and kissed hands, saying, 'I plight my troth to the kindest of *Mistresses*.'" And he led her from the bleak uplands of Gladstonian conscientiousness down primrose paths.*

Disraeli's success in this troubadour style was instantly apparent. Never before (except in those few months when he was feeling his way) had she worked with so amusing a Prime Minister, and, with her returning strength and her reaction from harangues, her appetite for amusement had come back to her. She had felt a girlish *Schwärm* for Lord Melbourne, but long ago she had seen how hollow that spurious happiness and excitement had been. Then there had followed those twenty blissful years when her labours for the State had been labours of love because her husband was her director whatever party might be in power. Sir Robert Peel had been a valued friend, and so had Lord Aberdeen, and Lord Palmerston had been a nightmare, and there had been Lord Russell and Lord Derby and finally Mr. Gladstone from whose oppressive deference and wearisome insistence her new Prime Minister had delivered her. Really it was almost as if he had rescued some high born maiden from an Ogre, and he hastened to confirm that impression by every means in his power. Among these was the questionable device, which Gladstone never employed, of blackening his predecessor. In the first year of his office the Public Worship Regulation Bill designed to check the growth of Ritualism in the Church came before the House of Commons, and he told the Queen that the only logical conclusion of Gladstone's speech in opposition "was the dis-establishment of that Church of which your Majesty is the

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 318-322.

Head."* It is also certain that when a monstrous and ludicrously false scandal about Mr. Gladstone's moral character reached the Queen's ears, he allowed her, at the least, to continue to believe that there might be some truth in it. His dexterity in managing her combined with such devices eventually convinced the Queen that any political opponent of his must, *ipso facto*, be an enemy of the State.

There soon came to Disraeli an opportunity of testing his influence over her. In May the Duchess of Edinburgh's father Tsar Alexander II came to stay with the Queen at Windsor : this was the first time since the Prince Consort's death that any Royal Personage, save relations and those for whom she need not alter her ordinary mode of life, had been her guest. She had made her plans for going up to Balmoral two days before the Autocrat was to leave England, and both her Foreign Secretary (Lord Derby) and her Secretary for India were very uneasy at the notion of the Tsar being treated quite so much *en famille*. In vain they humbly presented their views, but it was only on the representations of Disraeli that she consented to remain. It was a test case : he, and he alone, had induced her to put off the Hegira, and presently with a stroke of intuitive genius, he sent his compliments to Mr. John Brown.

He settled down to a process of intensive cultivation, the main principle of which was flattery ; flattery of that specially irresistible kind which is founded on fact. She was Queen of England : and the fantastic champak-odoured garden which he made to bloom for her was rooted in that soil. It was impossible to conceive a more splendid destiny than being Queen of England, and its splendour was only superficially symbolized by crown and sceptre and such trappings. They were no more than tributes

* Letters, II, ii, p. 341.

to her personally, and she would have been just as much Herself without them. He turned his prodigious sense of the romantic and of the picturesque on to her, as if it had been an arc-light, and she saw herself illuminated in that carefully-adjusted beam. Almost she felt herself to be what it suggested that she was, a magical figure, a Faery Queen or, alternatively, Titania. Of course she did not believe it : that was Mr. Disraeli's playful way, but how subtly encouraging were his pretty fancies ! It was very pleasant to know that the primroses which she had plucked in the woods at Osborne and sent to him made him think that her sojourn in her enchanted island had quickened them into bloom, and when he held up to her the mirror into which he gazed, she saw something — just in fun — of what he meant. His association of himself with her in these charades — she always liked acting — made this the more real to her, and when she sent him a card for February 14, he deliberately compared himself "to young Valentine lying on a grassy bank and receiving this token from a rosy cloud." Of course, he was "daffing," as her Highlanders would say, but it was easier to see herself as Titania when he coupled with that the far more preposterous image of himself, with his seamed, parchment face, and his seventy years and his aged lizard-like eyes, as smooth-cheeked Valentine, sandalled and bare-legged, sleeping under the sky on a grassy bank. It is tempting to think that on receipt of this wondrous letter she had one of those fits of helpless laughter which nothing could stop. But all this badinage served its purpose; it amused her, and how, after Mr. Gladstone, she liked being amused ! And he was clever with her : he did not irritate her with pertinacity and prolixity, but if he judged that her mind was made up on any point, he ceased any frontal attack ; and, if he thought the matter was important, he made a veiled and oblique advance from

another quarter, with hints and suggestions so subtly conveyed that she spontaneously adopted them, and believed that she had conceived the idea herself. Above all, he made a point of seeking her guidance, instead of stating her Government's views for her direction. "It may be unconstitutional," he wrote to her in quite early days, "for a Minister to seek advice from his Sovereign, instead of proffering it ; but your Majesty has, sometimes, deigned to assist Mr. Disraeli with your counsel, and he believes he may presume to say, with respectful candour, that your Majesty cannot but be aware how highly Mr. Disraeli appreciates your Majesty's judgment and almost unrivalled experience of public life." * There was nothing particularly unconstitutional about such a course, but Her Majesty could not but be unaware how un-Gladstonian it was.

Even more un-Gladstonian than the "daffing" about Titania and Valentine, of which Mr. Gladstone was constitutionally incapable, was his forbearance to plague her about bridges and embankments. Except for his one intervention on behalf of the Tsar, he never worried her to curtail her picnics at Balmoral and her drives at Osborne, and he never unduly pressed her even about steps which he thought important. To find some employment for the Prince of Wales was one of them, for he had a high opinion of his abilities and thought it waste and worse that the heir to the throne should play "Prince Hal" and spend his time and his wits and his money to such unedifying purpose. Possible work for him in the India Office had already been thought of, and Disraeli picked up the suggestion. India, ever since it had been taken over by the Crown after the mutiny had been more than Laodicean in its tepidity to the Raj : it looked upon the English rule as that of a remote and unsympathetic Omnipotence represented by overbearing and peremptory

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 333-334.

lieutenants who regarded its millions as niggers, and gave orders in the name of an impersonal V.R. . . But how about India itself for the Prince, thought Disraeli, instead of the India Office ? The Prince himself had long wanted to go there, and Disraeli guessed that his extraordinarily genial manner, already manifested when, as a boy, he represented his mother in Canada, might be a real service to the Empire. Lord Salisbury, Secretary for India, concurred, so also, guardedly, did the Viceroy, Lord Northbrook, but what about the Queen ?

At first she did not like it at all. India was a long way off, though the Suez Canal was now open, and India, so she wrote to the Crown Princess Frederick, was doing very well : there was no anxiety about India, all was quiet. And what would happen if she died ? And what about the precedence of the Viceroy who officially represented her ? Would he be snuffed out like a candle as long as Bertie was on Indian soil, or would Bertie, her eldest son, be his inferior ? In that case India would imagine that the Viceroy was of greater immensity than the heir to the throne. And what about the expense ? All the old bogeys came to life again, and it may safely be said that if Mr. Gladstone had been Prime Minister now, the scheme would have been turned down. Up she went to Balmoral, though there were rumours of war in Europe, and Bismarck was being peculiarly provocative and her Parliament was sitting, but instead of bombarding her with tabulated reasons for the Prince's visit to India, Mr. Disraeli made no allusion to it, but wrote her a charming letter saying how happy it made him to hope that the Highland air would restore her health : at Hughenden where he had gone for a few days there were cuckoos in every clump with the responsive round-lays of wood-pigeons. He added a postscript for her fifty-sixth birthday : with all her trials and sorrows he would

not speak of happiness, but trusted that "you will be sustained by the recollection that you live in the hearts and thoughts of many millions though in none more deeply and more fervently than in the heart of him who, with humble duty, pens these spontaneous lines." In this bright atmosphere which he created round her, the bogeys melted away. She consented to the Indian tour and the Prince left England in September. His mother could not quite realize even now that he was grown up, and gave him directions to be careful what he ate, to observe Sunday in the English mode, and to go to bed at ten when possible.*

The thought of India continued to "rouse vibrations" in the minds of the Queen and her Prime Minister after H.M.S. *Serapis* had left European shores. Passing through the Red Sea the Prince wrote to Lord Granville about the Suez Canal: "It is certainly an astounding work, and it is an extraordinary pity that it was not made by an English Company and kept in our hands, because as it is our highway to India, we should [in case of trouble there] be obliged to take it — by force of arms if necessary." It was Palmerston who had missed that chance and now it was for Disraeli, his great admirer, to rectify it. Luck favoured him: Turkey was nearly bankrupt and the Khedive Ismail owing to his monstrous extravagance more than bankrupt, and the opportunity occurred of purchasing his shares in the Canal. The price was £4,000,000, and the compatriot House of Rothschild furnished the cash within ten days. Disraeli announced the purchase to the Queen in his best style as if the Canal was her private property like Osborne or Balmoral: "It is just settled; you have it, Madam!" The importance of the Suez Canal as regards India had never entered her head before, but this personal present delighted her: "It is *entirely* the doing of Mr. Disraeli," she wrote to Mr.

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 400-404. Lee, King Edward VII, i, p. 374.

Theodore Martin (now buried fathoms deep in the material she had sent him for the second volume of the *Life of the Prince Consort*) “who has *very large ideas* and *very lofty views* of the position the country should hold. His mind is so much greater, larger, and his apprehension of things great and small so much quicker than that of Mr. Gladstone.” His stock went up, and so did that of the House of Rothschild, which had advanced the purchase price at the very low rate of $2\frac{1}{2}\%$ (for the security of the British Government was fairly solid) and the notion of granting a peerage to a Jew, which the Queen had so firmly repudiated a few years before, became far less unthinkable. A loan to England was a patriotic act, and was quite unlike loans to foreign countries, which were mere gambling. Disraeli had once dubbed his race “those bright children of the sun,” and indeed the sun was beginning to shine upon them even in the foggy north. The slight friction there had been between him and the Queen over ecclesiastical appointments was quite smoothed over.*

The Queen continued to muse over India. The most gratifying reports were coming home about the enormous success the Prince was having there. Most of the native Princes had hitherto regarded the Raj with much the same sullen resentment as their subjects, but the Prince with his personal geniality and power of enjoyment was causing them to reconsider their views : the Raj seemed very friendly and accessible. Their Ministers found him most intelligent : he understood, and wanted to understand more about the Government of native States. He held with the greatest dignity a special and magnificent Chapter of the Star of India, and when that splendid pageant was over, he went to a farce called “My Awful Dad” : he shook hands with every survivor of the loyal defenders of Lucknow, he shot tigers and went to

* Lee, *King Edward VII*, i, p. 295. *Letters*, II, ii, pp. 422-428.

church. All his gifts of good companionship which had been despised as frivolous were worth something after all, for everyone was agreed that by this combination of dignity and geniality he was putting the relations of the Crown with native Princes on a perfectly new footing.

The success of the tour caused a project which had long been in the Queen's mind to revive again : possibly the account of the illuminations at Bombay on the Prince's birthday had given it an impetus, for there had been quaintly gratifying mottoes among the decorations, such as "How is your Royal Mother ?" "Tell Mamma we're happy." After the Indian Mutiny there had been a suggestion that she should add to her "style" Empress of India, and again in 1873 she had privately put the question before Gladstone's India Office, but nothing had come of it. Secretly, she still hankered after it, and now that Bertie, as her representative, was making himself so popular, here was an admirable opportunity to take it up again, and she thought it would give the greatest satisfaction in India. She notified her wish to Disraeli and Lord Salisbury, neither of whom, though acquiescing, was at all enthusiastic. But she had her way, and since the occasion seemed, like grants for her children, to call for her presence, she opened Parliament in person on February 8, 1876, and in the Speech from the Throne, informed her Lords and Commons that a Bill, conferring this new title upon her, would be presented to them. But not a hint had she given to the Prince out in India of her intention, and the first he heard of it was in a foreign news-telegram in an Indian paper. This withholding of the scheme from him must have been deliberate, and he was exceedingly annoyed. Possibly the Queen anticipated objections on his part, possibly it was only another instance of her not choosing to let him know anything of State affairs.*

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 242, 440. Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 402.

In Parliament there was violent opposition to this Royal Titles Bill, which "shocked and surprised" the Queen, and called from her volleys of uncompromising epithets. She considered it "a *mere* attempt to injure Mr. Disraeli but which is most disrespectful and indecorous" and as for the Duke of Somerset's language in the House of Lords, it was ungentlemanlike and unusual and disrespectful and offensive. Besides, when she drove through Whitechapel to open a new wing of the London Hospital, she had seen a large inscription and several small ones: "Welcome, Queen and Empress" which proved how popular the new title was. Disraeli himself described the piloting of the Bill through the House as an exposure of weeks to a fiery furnace, but the Queen sent him a portrait of herself which he assured her would "animate and sustain him in many cares and troubles."

One of these troubles was a letter from the Prince, furious at not having been told about the business, and in answer to Disraeli's engaging suggestion that he might now be an Imperial Highness, he replied that nothing would induce him to be anything of the sort, and that India, instead of being gratified, was perfectly indifferent to the honour done to her teeming millions. But the Bill went through, and the fiery furnace subsided, and Disraeli took the portrait down to Hughenden, for he did not want to be parted from it while he was in London.* But he felt old and tired, and "V. R. and I" more delighted with him than ever, created him Earl of Beaconsfield when the Session was over, and, as Prime Minister still, he directed the ship from the less storm-swept bridge of the House of Lords.

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 449, 451. Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 403.

CHAPTER XVII

THE disorganization and bankruptcy of Turkey, reacting on Egypt, which had made possible the purchase of Khedive Ismail's 177,000 shares in the Suez Canal had other and less agreeable consequences. Bosnia and Herzegovina had revolted from the Porte in 1875, and the next year this revolt spread to Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria. For its suppression, which was justifiable enough in itself, the Porte employed irregular troops, Bashi-Bazouks, who were neither more nor less than undisciplined brigands out for loot, and they committed frightful barbarities in the revolting provinces. The Queen felt the greatest horror at these outrages, and wrote, unofficially through General Ponsonby, to Lord Derby, her Foreign Secretary, to say that the Porte should be warned that, if they continued, England must withdraw her support from Turkey. But it was impossible to dictate to the Porte what sort of troops should be employed, and Lord Derby found that the Bulgarians were no better: there was no such thing as a Turkish prisoner.* Out of this situation there developed three years of the most complicated international politics, of which, however, the main lines are clear enough.

The Serbian insurrection had from the first been encouraged by Russia; she had stiffened the Serbian forces with Russian troops, and they were under the command of Russian officers. In spite of this the insurrection in the

* Letters, II, ii, p. 471.

autumn was being rapidly suppressed, and Russia officially threatened to intervene on the usual Christian pretext : the Serbians were of the Slav race, and they were Christians brutally treated by the infidel Turks. That, on the face of it, seemed a purely crusading fervour, but it was no more than an excuse : her real reason was that she wanted to force Turkey into war with her, with the object of occupying Constantinople and, in Asia, of advancing towards India.

Russia's intention was hailed as pure crusade by Mr. Gladstone, who, with his unique power of isolating one issue from the web of all those that were interwoven with it, concentrated on it alone. He had retired the year before from the leadership of the Liberal Party, now represented in the House of Lords by Lord Granville and in the Commons by Lord Hartington, but the felling of trees at Hawarden and the study of Homer and of the doctrine of Eternal Punishment seemed but to have bottled up instead of employing his energies. He flung his hatchet aside, he pushed back his chair from the special table in his library where he pursued his theological and literary studies, he looked up his trains in Bradshaw, the print of which he declared to be a blot on civilization, and full of the isolated fervour of Christian zeal he plunged into polemical politics again. Holy Russia was defending the Christians of her race against the monstrous enormities of the infidels, and Christian England must rise as one man and help to expel the Turks from Europe, bag and baggage and Bashi-Bazouks and Pashas. Without doubt this crusading enthusiasm was sincere, but he cannot have been unaware that it afforded a wonderful slogan for a political campaign. He must have scented battle. It was the policy of the Government, who were perfectly aware that Russia's championship of the Cross was

one with the demolition of the Crescent, to shore up Turkey and frustrate Russia's sub-ikon ambitions, but undeniably Gladstone's crusade in England was gaining an immense following, whose political sympathies were being simultaneously enlisted. It was no use for Lord Beaconsfield to scoff at the movement as an exhibition of "sentimental eccentricity," for the eccentrics were far too numerous and too influential to be disposed of by an ironical phrase: moreover his Cabinet was divided, and both his Foreign Secretary and Lord Salisbury were inclined to let Turkey stew in her own juice. Next year, 1877, Russia declared war on the Porte, and though in the autumn her advance on Constantinople was held up for three months by the resistance of the fortress of Plevna, there was no obstacle in her way, when Plevna fell in December, to impede her. Throughout this year, Lord Beaconsfield had been unable to take any decided step, for the divisions in his Cabinet and the eccentrics in the country were too much for him, and though goaded by the Queen, he waited on events. But after the fall of Plevna it was manifest even to the most ardent followers of Gladstone's crusade (and no doubt to its leader) what was the inspiring force of Holy Russia's intervention on behalf of Serbia, and a strong feeling in the country demanded that Russia must curb her Christian militancy. A vote of credit for £6,000,000 for "naval and military requirements" was passed and the Mediterranean fleet was ordered to Constantinople. Such proximity to the advancing Russian armies was extremely dangerous, and Lord Salisbury summed up the situation with that dry clarity so characteristic of him: "Our fleet is in the Marmora because the Russians are at Constantinople. The Russians would say that their army was at Constantinople because our fleet is in the Marmora. Each is deterred from being

first to propose a simultaneous retreat by fear that enhanced pretensions would thereby be encouraged on the other side." *

But Russia was at last convinced that, if sufficiently provoked, England might act, the advance on Constantinople was halted, and the Turkish proposal for an armistice accepted. The treaty of San Stefano was concluded between the combatants in March 1878, but Russia with a sort of slow yokel cunning insisted that the provisions of it should at present remain a secret: possibly she hoped that she would be able to put them into effect before anyone was aware what she was at. When these provisions were disclosed they could not possibly be accepted by the Powers, for Bulgaria, though released from Turkish suzerainty, was brought within the sphere of Russian influence, and was given ports on the Aegean. Russia would thus obtain direct access to the Mediterranean, which was contrary to the articles of the Treaty of Paris concluded in 1856 after the Crimean war. This could not be allowed to stand, and, at Bismarck's invitation, a Congress met in June at Berlin: Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Salisbury were the British representatives. The chief difficulty was the limitation of Russia's influence to the South, Lord Beaconsfield insisting that it should not extend beyond the Danube. His aged inscrutable visage enabled him to bluff over this and over the cession of Cyprus to England to which Russia strongly objected, and his hint to the Congress that he had ordered his special train back to England, leaving these questions to be settled "by other means," caused Russia to throw her hand in.† After a month's session the Treaty was signed, and he returned to England bringing "Peace with Honour."

Such in the roughest outline were the international agita-

* Letters, II, ii, p. 613.

† *Ibid.*, p. 630.

tions of those three years : scarcely a month went by without there arising some cloud, small as a man's hand, which might presently break with tempest over Europe. The effect of this continual tension and anxiety on the Queen was amazing. For some years before, signs of returning vitality and rejuvenescence had been visible, but this perpetual strain with its constant calls on her judgment was precisely the tonic she needed. Hitherto she had wailed and protested at the cruel way in which she was overworked, at the callousness of those who teased and tormented her to make exertions of which she was incapable : she had been full of self-pity for the lonely lot of the "poor Queen," but now there was an end of that. Instead of insisting on remaining at Osborne or fleeing to Balmoral to the great inconvenience of her Ministers, she positively offered to leave her retreats for Windsor, and instead of having to be urged by her Ministers to a greater activity it was she who spurred and hustled them. No doubt the fact that she was working with a Prime Minister who was congenial to her both personally and politically, instead of one whose policy she detested, and whose exhortations only made her resistance more stubborn, helped in this restoration ; for now, as Disraeli had once put it, she gave her Prime Minister inspiration, and he gave her devotion. But the imagination boggles at the thought of what would have happened had Gladstone, with his Holy Russia crusade, been in power. It was bad enough as it was ; sometimes she thought that he had taken leave of his reason, but her real opinion was that he was an enemy of peace in encouraging Russia to think that England would never fight or resist her arrogance. She could not forgive the way he had "played the honour and interest of this country into the hands of Russia . . . it was utterly inexplicable for statesmen who have been in high office and who have known all the difficulties and anxieties of Government to be-

-have as they have done" ; in fact when Lord Beaconsfield said that Gladstone was worse than the atrocities he was denouncing, she thought that very well put. Parliamentary opposition ought to be silenced when international relations were at stake : the Attorney General should have taken action — on what grounds it was not very evident — when Mr. Gladstone held a crusading meeting about the Serbians. Never, so she somewhat rashly declared, could she accept him again as her Prime Minister, for "I never could have the slightest *particle* of confidence in Mr. Gladstone, *after* his violent mischievous and dangerous conduct for the last three years." Even that frightful Lord Palmerston against whose foreign policy she and Albert had so often and so vainly protested was better than this, for Palmerston was "always *for keeping up England*, and Mr. G. for letting it down." He would have let Russia trample on British interests in the East where and when she pleased, and "these are points which I *never* could *allow* to be trifled with, and I could have no confidence in men who attempted this." *

Equally vigorous and decided was she throughout on the subject of Russia. Russia, she begged her Ministers to understand, had instigated the Balkan revolts and was therefore primarily responsible for the atrocities which she deplored. It was impossible to trust her : in spite of profuse promises she was bent on pushing her way into Armenia, and then she would say that she had been forced to ! And if she was allowed to occupy Constantinople even temporarily, England would no longer exist as a great Power. The Tsar must be told "that we will *not allow* him to go to Constantinople and that that would be a *casus belli*." She drove and harried her Prime Minister : "he must be firm and act as he intended" . . . "he must insist on action or the Russians will *crow* over us" . . . "every hour is

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 47, 48.

precious : Trop tard is a terrible motto. . . Always putting off has been our weakness." Physically as well all her energy was pouring back : she reviewed troops, she went on board her ships, and found she had not forgotten her sea-legs : she went to see a game of La Crosse ; she received that queer man Mr. Richard Wagner, who wrote such extraordinary music — surely Germany was a little mad about him — she had an impromptu dance at Osborne, "and I danced a Quadrille and a valse (which I had not done for eighteen years) with dear Arthur, who vales extremely well, and I found I could do it, as well as ever !" : and up at Balmoral the "Great Expeditions" were renewed. Perhaps her energies had been unimpaired throughout the long twilight of her seclusion, but they had been devoted to guarding it, and to resisting enjoyment. Now, spontaneously, she was enjoying again, and never surely in the history of nervous disorders was there a more triumphant and lasting recovery ; as each New Year came round, instead of looking backwards with regrets for vanished happiness, she prayed for renewed strength to improve, and do her duty and fulfil her arduous task.*

All her sagacity and shrewdness, which had been overshadowed by her melancholy, beamed out again. The Crown Princess of Prussia, for ever veering round like a weathercock, always clever and never wise, wrote her a letter of advice, saying that all lovers of England were so anxious that she should take this opportunity, when Turkey's troubles were thick on her, of annexing Egypt. Bismarck, she told her mother, was convinced that England "ought" to do so, for he considered that "a strong England" would be of great use in Europe. Was it not a cause for rejoicing that Bismarck should feel like that ? In answer the poor lady got a reply of withering perspicacity :

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 573, 595, 616.

"I will now answer your letter of the 11th relative to Egypt, the proposal about which *coming from you* has indeed surprised me very much, and seems to me Bismarck's view. Neither *Turkey* or *Egypt* have done *anything* to offend *us*. Why should *we* make a *wanton* aggression, such as the taking of Egypt would be? It is not *our* custom to *annex countries* (as it is in *some others*) unless we are obliged and forced to do so, as in the case of the Transvaal Republic: Prince Bismarck would probably like us to seize Egypt, as it would be giving a great slap in the face of France, and be taking a mean advantage of her inability to protest. It would be a *most* greedy action. I own I *can't* for a moment understand *your* suggesting it. What we *intend* to do we *shall* do without Prince Bismarck's permission. . . How can *we* protest against *Russia's* doings if *we* do the *same* ourselves?" *

Another sign of her emergence from the twilight was her recognition of the Prince of Wales's abilities, because it testified to the liberation of her mind from its pathetic dependence on the Prince Consort's infallibility. He had pronounced his son stupid because he had no love of books, and frivolous because he was sociable. It was a mistake that might easily be made by an extremely conscientious man whose valuation of the gifts of others was based on their coincidence with his own, and the Queen, hitherto accepting him as incarnate wisdom, was now at last slipping off that shackling conviction. Lord Beaconsfield had helped her to free herself: he had a very high opinion of the Prince's abilities, and since his return from India had paid great attention to his judgment, and quite suddenly we find them in consultation. The Prince, for instance, had suggested to the Prime Minister that Lord Salisbury should make pilgrimage to the Foreign Ministers of other Powers before he attended the Conference at Constantinople in 1876, and though the English Foreign Office thought ill of the notion, Beaconsfield considered the Prince

* Letters, II, ii, pp. 546-550.

a better counsellor.* Again and again he invited his advice exactly as if he had been partner in the businesses from which he was still excluded. The effect was that the Queen actually asked Beaconsfield to keep him informed of Russia's untrustworthy professions. Again when in 1878 the Prince went out to Berlin for the marriage of his niece Princess Charlotte, the Queen, instead of begging him not to mix himself up in politics, desired him to talk to Bismarck and Moltke, and report to her. Bismarck put before him the alluring scheme concerning Egypt, which had taken the fancy of the Crown Princess, but it did not take him : he saw underlying it precisely what the Queen had seen, namely an embroilment between France and England, and Bismarck's assurance that he could keep France quiet did not take him in for a moment. Similarly it was he who urged the Queen to send Lord Beaconsfield to Berlin in 1878 to represent England at the Conference : she demurred at first, for he was old and infirm and Berlin was decidedly too far off, and she would find it very trying not to have him always at hand. The Prince pressed it on her and eventually she yielded to the manifest advantage of English interests. From Berlin Beaconsfield reported progress to the Prince as if to the Queen herself, and informed him of the secret Treaty by which Turkey ceded Cyprus to England. Such confidences on the part of the man whose judgment the Queen now trusted as firmly as she had once trusted her husband's had its due effect on her. As for herself, though her devotion to the Prince Consort's memory was as lovingly steadfast as ever, she no longer felt the helplessness with which the deprivation of his counsels had once crushed her. She trusted again to the conclusions of her own extremely shrewd mind, without miserably groping for guidance from her knowledge of what he had laid down.

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 423.

Though her mind had grown in no way more subtle, experience had greatly enriched and matured it, giving her vast stores of sound knowledge on which swiftly and instinctively to base her decisions. In this sense the Albertian age had passed, and the Victorian age had begun.

The Russo-Turkish question which contained all the inflammable material necessary to kindle a European war had been robbed of its immediate menace by the Treaty of Berlin, but throughout 1879, the last year of Beaconsfield's Ministry, there were plenty of other danger spots. First, there was Egypt. Instead of adopting Bismarck's slightly transparent device of seizing Egypt, and trusting him (of all people) to keep the French quiet, the English Government, steering clear of Red Ridinghood's grandmamma, established a joint Anglo-French control over Egyptian finances. Khedive Ismail jibbed at this curb and, establishing a National Government, repudiated all foreign loans. It was a delicate moment for the dual control, but they dealt with it harmoniously. Ismail was deposed, his son Tewfik reigned in his stead, and two permanent Controllers, Major Evelyn Baring and M. de Blignières were appointed. Then there was the Zulu war, in which the Prince Imperial, only child of the widowed Empress Eugénie was killed, when serving with the English expedition. That had hardly been settled by the capture of King Cetewayo, when trouble broke out again in Afghanistan. The English agent at Cabul, Sir Louis Cavagnari and all his staff were massacred, and General Roberts was sent out from India and occupied Cabul.

These might seem sundered and disconnected disturbances, but to the Queen the obligations they entailed sprang from one supreme and indivisible cause, namely existence and the needs of the British Empire. Beaconsfield was worried about the dissensions in the Cabinet as to how to meet the

expenses of these expeditions, and she wrote him a letter of encouragement and exhortation which shows that it was in no daffing Valentinian mood that he had called her his inspiration : "If *we are* to maintain our position as a *first rate* Power — and of that no-one (but people of the Bright or *rather Anderson Jenkins* etc. school) can doubt, we must with our Indian Empire and large Colonies be *pre-~~pared~~* for *attacks* and *wars*, *somewhere* or *other* CONTINU-ALLY, and the true economy will be to be *always ready*. Lord Beaconsfield can do his country the greatest service by repeating that again and again, and by *seeing it carried out*." *

There was the creed which, as she emerged from her seclusion, was her solemn statement of faith as Sovereign. It was to make a visible sign of that inward reality, perhaps, that she had coveted the imperial title which her Prime Minister at her express wish had procured for her, and she had seen the essential need of thinking imperially. For years the growth of the Empire had been going on : it seemed a process of nature, and satisfactory just as is the healthy growth of a boy in his teens to his parents, but now the Queen, sooner perhaps than any of her Ministers, had realized the huge significance of that growth. Never hereafter did she lose conscious sight of it, or fail to ring all the tocsins of alarm if there was the remotest menace to its welfare and its further expansion.

She had soon good reason to fly to the bell-rope. In the autumn of 1879 Gladstone started his Midlothian campaign, in preparation for the General Elections of the next year, and vehemently attacked Lord Beaconsfield and the imperialistic policy with which the Queen had, heart and soul, identified herself. Already in her eyes Gladstone had proved himself unpatriotic in his support of Russia's crusade

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 37, 38.

on behalf of oppressed Balkan States, which masked her own ambition : now by denunciations of these imperialistic expeditions he branded himself as a traitor to the Empire. The antagonism between them penetrated to the very marrow, for to the Queen's simple and sincere religious convictions, to defend and advance the interests of the Empire on principles of beneficence and justice was a direct service laid on her by God and her Coronation oath ; Gladstone, equally sincere, knew (no other word will serve) that he was an instrument, however unworthy, in the hand of the Almighty, and that there was committed to him the duty of procuring the downfall of Beaconsfield and all his policies. The return of the Liberals to power, therefore, might be regarded with apprehension.

In February 1880 the Queen opened Parliament in person for the fourth time during Beaconsfield's Premiership. A couple of by-elections had gone in favour of the Conservatives, and next March Lord Beaconsfield dissolved Parliament, believing that a General Election held now would return his party to power. The Queen felt no anxiety about the result, and went abroad for a holiday to the Villa Hohenlohe at Baden, which her half-sister Feodore had bequeathed to her, just before the Election began. An ominous telegram from Lord Beaconsfield reached her there about the way the Elections were going, and ominously she declared that if the Opposition "forced" themselves upon her she would have to speak her mind very clearly on what she thought of their policies. She came back to England to find that the 349 Liberals and 60 Home Rulers had won a sweeping victory over 243 Conservatives.*

The Queen had declared that Gladstone should never be her Prime Minister again, and she did her best to avoid it. Lord Hartington was official leader of the Opposition in the

* Letters, I, iii, pp. 64, 73.

House of Commons since Gladstone's retirement five years ago, and, on Lord Beaconsfield's advice, she sent for him to form a Ministry. But though Mr. Gladstone had resigned the leadership, everyone, including Lord Hartington, knew that this great victory at the polls was his work. In obedience to the Royal command he went to ask Gladstone if he would serve under him, well aware that he would refuse, and also that no Prime Minister could hope to carry on without him. There was no way out, and she had to send for Gladstone who took office.

Friction started at once over the formation of his Cabinet. The Queen wanted Lord Hartington to take the War Office : he proposed Mr. Childers. She wanted Lord Coleridge as Lord Chancellor : he, Lord Selbourne. She wished to know why Mr. Goschen was not included in the Cabinet, but Gladstone did not give him a seat. He nominated Mr. Chamberlain as President of the Board of Trade : before agreeing she wished "to feel sure he had never spoken disrespectfully of the Throne." He nominated Sir Charles Dilke as under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, but first, she said, he must give an explanation, in writing or in the House of Commons, of his "very offensive speeches on the Civil List and the Royal Family." She did not like the appointment of Lord Ripon as Viceroy of India, and refused to have Lord Fife as Lord Chamberlain. Right down Gladstone's list they were at variance, but the Queen, with a real desire not to embarrass a new Government, yielded to him on every point, though with the expressed hope that on future occasions he would reciprocate her indulgence.*

But it did not augur very well for those future occasions that when the Government had been in only six months, she wrote to Lord Beaconsfield : "*I never* write except on formal *official* matters to the Prime Minister. . . I look always to

* Guedalla, *The Queen and Mr. Gladstone*, ii, pp. 85-93.

you for ultimate help.”* Most acutely did she feel the loss of friendly and confident relations with him and the difficulty of working with a man whom politically she thoroughly mistrusted. A curious and pathetic entry in her Journal for New Year’s Day 1881 shews that she did not acquit herself of all blame for these unfortunate relations and for the sense of loneliness to which they gave rise. She wrote : “Another year past, and we begin one with heavy clouds. . . I feel very anxious and have no one to lean on. . . I feel how sadly deficient I am, and how over-sensitive and irritable, and how uncontrollable my temper is, when annoyed and hurt. But I am so overdone, so vexed, and in such distress about my country that that must be my excuse.”

She must try to do better, and with a sigh she wrote to the man who was causing her such dejection : “She thanks him for his good wishes, and prays that the heavy clouds which now surround the political horizon and her Empire may by God’s blessing be dispelled, and that Mr. Gladstone may be guided by Him to do what is right and just. She wishes him and his family a happy new year.”†

But the new year was full of trouble for her both personally and politically. There was Lord Beaconsfield’s death in April, and in both respects that was a cruel stroke. Since the death of the Prince Consort twenty years before there had been no-one on whose political wisdom she more relied, and none with whom she had been on terms of such personal affection. For the moment all dissensions were stilled, and she and her Prime Minister shook hands over the memory of “her dear great friend.”

The antagonisms between these two incompatible natures were resumed. There had been a serious disaster to British

* Letters, II, iii, p. 143.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 177, 178.

arms in South Africa at Majuba Hill early in 1881. General Roberts was sent out, but before he got there peace had been arranged and the Boers regained their independence under British suzerainty. To the Queen's imperialistic sense this was monstrous and most damaging to the prestige of the Empire, and she thoroughly distrusted, as it proved with reason, such misplaced magnanimity.* In the autumn trouble began in Egypt, and Bismarck saw the fruit of his suggestion that England should take Egypt pleasantly ripening on its own account. Arabi, the Khedive Tewfik's Minister of War, raised a military revolt against the Dual Control of England and France, and in the summer of 1882 a serious riot in Alexandria occurred : some fifty French and English subjects were killed, and Arabi began to construct earthworks to defend the town against the English and French fleets. A bombardment ensued, but the French Government ordered their fleet to take no part in it, and the English acted alone in that and in the subsequent defeat of Arabi at Tel-el-Kebir. Twelve thousand British troops remained in the country, and though France had refused to take any hand in putting the rebellion down, she looked with strong suspicion on the action of the English and on this temporary occupation, which somehow suggested an idea of permanence.

Throughout, the Queen poured her imperialistic energies on the heads of her Ministers : the bewildered Mr. Childers at the War Office received from her in one day no less than seventeen notes and telegrams urging on him stronger and more immediate measures : she violently protested at the idea of withdrawing troops—Mr. Gladstone must remember how disastrous had been the loss of prestige in South Africa by doing that ;—she doubted whether twelve thousand were enough to restore security to Christians in out-

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 198–206.

-lying districts : indeed some troops must be kept there indefinitely. She wrote to her Foreign Minister : "Short of annexation our power in Egypt and our control of it ought to be *great* and *firm*, and we ought to show to *other* powers that we *shall* maintain this position though without *detri-ment* to them." Above all the power of the Sultan, her late ally, "must be reduced to a minimum." Empire-building was in process, and what reluctant masons were her Government ! *

These years were chequered with personal troubles and bereavement as well as with anxieties for the Empire. In 1882, just as she had got into her carriage at Windsor station, a man called Roderick Maclean fired at her with a revolver. This was the seventh outrage of the sort during her reign, but this time the pistol was loaded and it was a real attempt on her life. Maclean was tried for high treason, and to the Queen's strong disapproval was pronounced not guilty but insane. Next year John Brown died. Since the Prince Consort's death he had been her constant attendant wherever she was ; he was often peremptory and rude to her, he was far too fond of whisky, he was intolerable to visitors at Balmoral and Osborne, patting Ministers on the back and being odiously familiar to the family, but she had got to depend on him and his close, personal attendance in a manner both touching and ludicrous. As a youth he had been the Prince Consort's gillie, and, in that long morbid twilight in which she had wrapped herself after the Prince's death, it was not unnatural that he should have become to her a link with her husband and those happy holidays in the Highlands, and the "Great Expeditions." Some sentimental supposition of the sort may explain her devotion to him and the unresented liberties he took with her, which she would not have tolerated from any other living

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 309-347.

being. Her grief at his loss was very sincere, it was the loss of another real friend, and there was inserted in the Court Circular a panegyric on her faithful servant to whom she dedicated her new volume of extracts from her Journal about her life in the Highlands. She put up a statue to him on an eminence at Balmoral ; her Laureate, at her request wrote the dedicatory inscription :

"Friend more than Servant, loyal, truthful, brave
Self less than duty even to the grave." *

She put up a massive granite seat in the garden at Osborne to his memory : Sir Edgar Boehm produced a statuette of solid gold, and encouraged by the reception given to "More Leaves from the Journal of a Life in the Highlands" she meditated a third volume which would in fact have been a life of John Brown. She was induced to abandon this injudicious project on the very frank advice offered her by her new Dean of Windsor, Randall Davidson. He told her with great tact some of her subjects had not shewn themselves worthy of being admitted into further confidences about her private life, and after a long silence of deep displeasure, in which he wondered whether he had better resign the Deanery, she sent for him again, talked to him with her usual freedom and confidence, and no more was heard of Volume III.†

Next year, 1884, another intimate bereavement befell her. Her youngest son Prince Leopold, Duke of Albany, who had been married only just two years, died suddenly at Cannes. From birth he had been exceedingly delicate, and had had many attacks of illness any of which might have been fatal. Partly for his frailness, partly for his charm, his very great ability, and the laughing gallantry with which he

* Guedalla, ii, p. 254.

† Private information.

faced the disabilities of his life which hung always on so weak a thread, the Queen had a greater tenderness for him than for any of her other children. Of late years she had often consulted him on matters of State, even asking his advice on the wording of the Speech from the Throne, and he had sat by her when she held a Council of her Ministers,* at which function, both before and after the days of the Prince Consort, she had otherwise invariably been alone.

Unfortunately the Queen's relations with her Prime Minister did not improve: politically their views were too radically opposed to allow any but the most superficial cordiality, and even that broke down when, on a holiday cruise in September 1883 with Tennyson on board, Mr. Gladstone landed at Copenhagen without her permission and hobnobbed with the galaxy of Royal personages assembled there at the usual family party of the King of Denmark. The new Tsar Alexander III and his wife the King's daughter were there, his son the King of the Hellenes, the Princess of Wales, the Duchess of Cumberland and nineteen junior princes and princesses. They swarmed on to the *Pembroke Castle* for lunch, and in answer to the toast of his health, Gladstone spoke of the friendly feelings between Denmark and England and said something—a single sentence—to the King of the Hellenes about Bulgaria, but otherwise there was no political talk: Mr. Tennyson (whom he recommended for a Peerage) read two of his poems to these Crowned heads. But the Queen was "*very much surprised*" (a blighting observation) at what he had done, and her rebuke was peremptory: "The Prime Minister of England cannot move about as a private individual and any trip like the one he has just taken will lead, as she has above observed, to political speculations

* Letters, II, iii, p. 179.

which it is better to avoid." She was quite right: the British Ambassador in Vienna reported that Austria was convinced that some deep political plot, unfavourable to herself, was concocted on this visit.*

This was not a good prelude to the troubles arising this autumn in Egypt. Arabi had been crushed, but there arose a prophet, the Mahdi, who raised a fresh rebellion in the Sudan. An Egyptian force of ten thousand men under Hicks Pasha, who considered that such troops were not equal to their task, was ambushed at El Obeid and annihilated. Sir Evelyn Wood, now Sirdar, in an official letter to the Queen advised abandoning the Sudan to the Mahdi, and drawing the southern frontier line of Egypt at Assuan. It was the sort of policy she did not like, and though she consented to it, she thought her Government was acting in a half-hearted and indecisive manner. This was hardly fair, for the military authorities on the spot advised them that the conquest of the Sudan by Egyptian troops was out of the question, and the House of Commons would certainly not sanction the calling out of reserves and the vast war-vote which would be necessary if an English force was to be sent out for a job that was not the concern of England. It was therefore decided to abandon the Sudan.†

But there were many Egyptian garrisons scattered over the country and, again with the Queen's approval, General Gordon, who knew the native races better than any European, was sent out to evacuate these posts. But she herself was indecisive: she could not clearly determine what she wanted done, writing to Sir Evelyn Wood one day that Gordon ought to have been sent long ago, and a week afterwards to Gladstone "trembling for his safety." An atmosphere of nerves was abroad, nobody could make up his

* Guedalla, ii, pp. 242-247. Letters, II, iii, pp. 441-444.

† Letters, II, iii, pp. 455-470, 474, 477.

mind. In Cairo the Consul General Sir Evelyn Baring was very doubtful as to the expediency of attempting the evacuation, and first he considered Gordon quite unfit for it, and then that he was the best man to employ provided that his programme was clearly laid down for him. Gordon himself was equally indeterminate: when he arrived at Khartoum he was confident that the job would be finished in six months, and then he took another line, and urged the powers at Cairo to send him British or Indian troops and he would "smash the Mahdi." But this was not the mission with which he had been entrusted.*

By April 1884 the Mahdi's forces were investing Khartoum, and some expedition must clearly be sent for its relief. Interminable delays followed, but these were not wholly the fault of the Government but of the military authorities who could not agree upon the route it should take. Eventually it was decided to proceed *via* the Nile, and in August Lord Wolseley was sent out in command: in January 1885 a successful action at Abu Klea opened the way to Khartoum. But these procrastinations, for which the Queen blamed her Government, and her own presage of disaster had got cruelly on her nerves. She telegraphed her congratulations to Lord Wolseley direct without sending a copy of her telegram to the War Office, as was the invariable usage, and Lord Hartington, quite properly, wrote to Sir Henry Ponsonby asking whether she intended to adopt the same course for the future, as it put him in a false position. She replied to Sir Henry with a tirade that showed how fearfully overwrought she was: "She thinks Lord Hartington's letter *very officious* and *impertinent in tone*. The Queen has a *right* to telegraph congratulations and enquiries to *anyone* and won't stand dictation. She *won't* be a *machine*. But the Liberals always wish to make her *feel* THAT, and she

* Guedalla, ii, pp. 51, 52.

*won't accept it.** This message was not delivered in all its fury to the Secretary for War, and she acknowledged she had been wrong in not sending her telegram to the War Office. But that was how she felt, and it supplies comment to her own pathetic entry in her Journal the year before, as to how annoyance and anxiety made her temper uncontrollable. Further comment was to follow.

Her forebodings were only too well founded. On January 20, General Gordon sent down four steamers from Khartoum to meet the expedition, and Sir Charles Wilson, in charge of the advance guard, fought his way up the Nile with two of them. When they came within sight of Khartoum, the Egyptian flag no longer flew on Government House. Khartoum had fallen, and General Gordon had been killed.

The news was received in London on February 5, and the effect on the nation was that of some great disaster in which its honour had been compromised : a hero had been abandoned at the post to which the Government had sent him. A vote of censure was only narrowly defeated in the House of Commons and was passed by a large majority in the House of Lords, and the Queen felt herself confirmed in the view she had expressed to her Prime Minister when, the year before, the Lords threw out the Franchise Bill, that they "represented the true feeling of the country." Personally she never forgave Mr. Gladstone for the fatal delay for which she chose to consider the Cabinet wholly responsible. In the first shock and horror at the news she was guilty of a regrettable lack of good taste, for she sent three telegrams to her Prime Minister, to Lord Granville and Lord Hartington not in cypher but *en clair*. They were identical in wording and ran : "These news from Khartoum are frightful and to think that all this might have been pre-

* Letters, II, iii, p. 595.

-vented and many precious lives saved by earlier action is too frightful." * These telegrams were handed in at the Osborne office, and were read by the clerks who transmitted and received them. To Gladstone who was extremely sensitive, and had always been punctiliously correct, except for that escapade in Denmark, in his dealings with her, this was outrageous, and he wondered, should this open telegram become known, if he could remain in office under this public censure. He replied in a very dignified manner pointing out that the delay in sending the expedition was mainly due to the procrastination of the military authorities on the choice of route, and finding himself unable "to follow the conclusion which Your Majesty has been pleased thus (*i. e. en clair*) to announce." He got no direct reply from her : it was sufficient that her Secretary should inform him that this telegram "contained no censure upon her Ministers." This was not true : she had explicitly blamed them for not taking action earlier. Her final word about it was as inexorable as language could render it : "Mr. Gladstone and the Government *have*—the Queen *feels it dreadfully*—Gordon's innocent, noble, heroic blood on their consciences. *No one* who reflects on *how* he was *sent* out, how he was *refused* can deny it ! It is *awful* . . . May they *feel* it, and may they be *made to do so* !" Or was she more bitterly inexorable yet when she enquired through her Secretary if Mr. Gladstone had not felt the fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon ? †

The breath of her displeasure continued in full blast over the discussions as to what must be done next to retrieve the disaster. She supported Lord Wolseley's desire to be made Governor General of the Sudan, she thought it necessary to have a British seat of Government at Khartoum, she

* Letters, II, iii, p. 597.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 597-600.

was bitterly opposed to the retreat of the expedition, and with none of these projects was her Cabinet in accord. To strengthen her hand, she wrote to Lady Wolseley: "In *strict confidence* I must tell you that I think the Government are *more incorrigible* than ever, and I do think that your husband should hold *strong* language to them, and *even* THREATEN to resign if he does *not* receive strong support and liberty of action. . ." Perhaps she realized that this was a rather questionable manoeuvre for she added: "*It must never appear* or Lord Wolseley *ever let out* the hint I give you. But I really think they must be *frightened*." Even more questionably she wrote to Lord Wolseley himself without the knowledge of her Cabinet, urging him to oppose all idea of retreat with the comment that "She *fears some* of the Government are very unpatriotic." That letter, too, she thought it prudent to tell him, he had better destroy or lock up.*

With this private prompting of her soldiers against her Government, which, very naturally, she hoped would not become public, went a peremptoriness towards her Prime Minister and her Cabinet which is without parallel. She took advantage again of her sex to say things which they would never have stood from a man, and the imperious tone of these communications betrays her exasperation at knowing she was helpless. She telegraphed to Gladstone: "After Sir E. Baring's telegram, you must make Wolseley Governor General. You must overlook smaller obligations and support Lord Wolseley by every means in your power. Make his request known and do not refuse him, but remember Gordon." Again she telegraphed on the subject of the withdrawal of troops from the Sudan: "It would be such an exhibition of weakness, and of the triumph of savages over British arms that it would seriously affect our position

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 619, 633.

in India and elsewhere." To Lord Hartington she wrote, frankly insolent, "Though the Queen has little if any hope of bringing the Cabinet to see what is right, and what is due to the honour of England etc" : and once again to her private Secretary, "Can the G. O. M. not be roused to some sense of honour ? * Indeed, she was doing her best "to make them feel it," for to tell Mr. Gladstone "to remember Gordon" was a piece of brutality only to be excused because the tragic episode had really made her ill. She did not pause to consider that with trouble again threatening with Russia on the Afghan frontier, no Government could have proposed the immediate reconquering of the Sudan, nor would any House of Commons under whatever leadership have sanctioned the military measures and the vast expense, on behalf of Egypt, that this would have entailed. The expedition was withdrawn, and the Sudan remained in the hands of the Dervishes till 1898, when Kitchener broke their power for ever by the victory of Omdurman, and reoccupied Khartoum.

Over the threat of trouble in Afghanistan Gladstone was quite firm. Russia's advance in the direction of India was "an unprovoked aggression" : Indian troops now being moved towards Suakin for the abandoned reconquest of the Sudan were held up for possible service against Russia, and a war-vote of £11,000,000 was passed. Of this more decisive policy the Queen approved, though she could not resist a slight dig at her Prime Minister by hinting that Russia probably expected that the Government would take this aggression lying down. But he could not satisfy her : from Aix where she had gone to recuperate she fired off complaints that his Russian policy was being carried on "by fits and starts" : she wrote to Lord Granville about her Prime Minister's complete disregard of her advice, and con-

* Guedalla, ii, p. 341. Letters, II, iii, pp. 635, 645, 646.

fessed that she was quite at a loss how to go on communicating with a Minister "who never *will* consider the effect of *all* his constant shiftings and changes on the country and on the whole world." * And the uneasiness deepened again when he foreshadowed to her his policy concerning Ireland. The outline was far from reassuring, for he wrote to her of his anxiety to get rid of "the centralization of governing powers for Ireland in what is known as 'Dublin Castle' as being in itself an enormous mischief." He foresaw the danger of local Government for the country assuming "the character of a supreme Parliament," and of the feeling in Ulster, but he thought that the risk was small compared to the possible benefits. It was all rather nebulous, because he had not as yet framed anything definite himself, but it promised trouble.†

For the present that trouble was averted by the unexpected defeat of the Government, early in June, over the Budget, and Gladstone resigned. The Queen was at Balmoral, and with a slight return of seclusion was unwilling to come back to Windsor, as he earnestly desired, earlier than the date she had fixed, because she was tired, and Windsor would be very crowded and unpleasant, since it was Ascot week. Impossible to go there, and as for Buckingham Palace that was not even mentioned. That was too much for Gladstone, and he replied he was too busy to go to Balmoral, and would keep her in touch with the situation from London. Rather surreptitious discussions took place by telegram. The Queen wanted Lord Salisbury to form a Conservative Government, but told Sir Henry Ponsonby to make private enquiries, in case he refused, as to whether Lord Hartington would carry on as Prime Minister, but Gladstone must not be told of this.

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 640-643.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 653-655.

Lord Hartington said he could not undertake it without Gladstone, but Lord Salisbury, though the Conservatives were in a minority in the House of Commons, accepted. The Queen thereupon accepted Gladstone's resignation and on June 24 Lord Salisbury took office.*

The Queen wrote in very gracious terms to Gladstone, offering him the usual Earldom for "his long and distinguished services." Considering the bitter animosity of her attitude towards him when he was in power, he appreciated the effort it must have cost her to be civil, and, as he told her, he was fully alive "to all the circumstances that gave it value." At Lord Salisbury's suggestion, she tried to get him to support legislature pending the dissolution of Parliament, but he could give no pledge about that, for if he did "not one of the measures now on the Order book of the House could be submitted even once to its judgment except at the pleasure of the Government." But he assured the Queen that "he felt perfectly sure there would be no unfair attacks, for it would be most improper and indecent for any opposition to attack a newly formed Government under any circumstances." With that she had to be content, and indeed it was an ample concession, and for the present the hatchet was buried. But the spade which had dug its grave was handy for its disinterment if needed again.†

In this summer of 1885 there occurred an event which brought to the Queen a greater brightness and happiness in her domestic life than had been hers since the death of the Prince Consort twenty-four years ago, namely the marriage of her youngest daughter Princess Beatrice to Prince Henry of Battenberg. He was the youngest of the three morganatic sons of Prince Alexander of Hesse, uncle of the

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 657-663.

† Guedalla, ii, pp. 372-373. Letters, II, iii, p. 672.

Grand Duke of Hesse who had married Princess Alice. His eldest brother Prince Louis had married the Queen's granddaughter Princess Victoria of Hesse and was now a Commander in the British Navy, while the second, Prince Alexander, was reigning Prince of Bulgaria. It was settled that Prince Henry and his wife should live with the Queen, whether at Osborne or Windsor or Balmoral, and instantly he made a sparkle and a gaiety in her home which had not been there through all the years of her widowhood. The Queen was devoted to him and he to her and he became the ideal son-in-law no less than the ideal husband. She was genuinely fond of music and he got Tosti to arrange musical evenings for her : she immensely enjoyed a play, and London companies came down to act at Windsor. Day after day people of note, such as the Queen would be interested to see, dined and slept there. As the years passed, grandchildren increased and there were tableaux the rehearsals of which she punctiliously attended and expressed the utmost astonishment and admiration of their performance. Rejuvenance of energy had already come to her : now there was added to that an intimate tenderness and indulgence. One night only a daughter and two or three ladies-in-waiting were dining with her, and they got a shade acid about a man who had behaved with a deplorable lack of decorum. But the Queen stopped these comments : "We're all growing very ill-natured," she said, and there was the end of that. Prince Henry was infinitely thoughtful for her, and how she loved the fun and the enjoyment of this altered atmosphere !

The General Election took place in November 1885, with the result that 249 Conservatives were returned, 335 Liberals and 86 Nationalists. The new Government therefore was in a hopeless minority if Liberals and Nationalists held together. The Queen seized the spade, and up came the

hatchet. Gladstone at all costs must be kept out of power : it could be done if Liberals opposed to Home Rule seceded, but if Gladstone's foreshadowed policy was carried through "it would be UTTER RUIN to the country and Europe" : a strong Coalition was necessary. She sent her Secretary to talk to Mr. Goschen about sowing dissensions among the Liberals, she sent her doctor Sir William Jenner to talk to Lord Salisbury, she even wrote herself to Mr. Goschen, fearing her Secretary had not put her view strongly enough, and told him that if he did not act the country would be ruined.* She opened Parliament in person in January 1886 to strengthen the weak hands, but the feeble knees were unconfirmed and within a few days the Conservatives were defeated on an amendment to the Speech from the Throne, and once more she had to send for Gladstone. It was a dreadful moment, and in her Journal she wrote, "he accepted (alas !)," but this can have been no surprise to her, for she had already told Mr. Goschen in one of her canvassing letters that "he was bent on forcing himself into office." She did Gladstone the justice of believing that he thought he had some great mission on behalf of Ireland, but that mission was Home Rule, and she told him quite frankly that "she always *wished to be able to give* her Prime Minister her *full support*, but it is impossible for her to do so, when the Union of the Empire is in danger of disintegration and serious disturbance" : in other words, not more direct, she declared him face to face to be the Empire's enemy. His Government was appointed without much difference of opinion, but it is to be feared that the Queen felt a slightly malicious pleasure in his difficulties in getting her new Household together, and she wrote with evident exultation to the Prince of Wales that two Duchesses and no less than seven Lords had refused to join it : for reasons

* Letters, II, iii, pp. 708-713.

which, politically, she could not fail to find satisfactory : "I *know* it is NOT meant out of *want of respect for me*, but of a *sense of patriotism* which *ought always to be* above party." Still it was atrocious of Mr. Gladstone to "expose" her to having only half a household ; but she enjoyed his discomfiture more than she disliked her own discomfort. It did not last for long, for in June Gladstone's Home Rule Bill came before the House and owing to the secession of 93 Liberal-Unionists under the lead of Lord Hartington, it was rejected by a majority of 30, and for the second time within eight months there was a General Election. The issue was Home Rule, and its supporters were swamped. Gladstone resigned and Lord Salisbury in July 1886 became Prime Minister for the second time.*

* Guedalla, ii, p. 405. Letters, II, iii, p. 718. *Ibid.*, III, i, pp. 32, 58.

CHAPTER XVIII

I

THE Queen's prestige and popularity had for the last few years been steadily on the increase. Her very animated quarrels with her Government had been mainly based on their faint-heartedness, their tepidity in the interests of the Empire, and this chimed in with the growing imperialism of the nation. The fall of Khartoum had been felt to be a national disgrace, and it was known how deep the Queen's indignation had been. Her attitude towards the Home Rule Bill had been equally uncompromising ; it had been an attack on the integrity of her Realm, and she was beginning to take shape in the minds of the vast majority of her subjects as the incarnation of England and Empire.

Then there was a very large class whom the publication of the Queen's two Highland Journals had profoundly affected. The sale had been enormous, and to thousands of homes that august figure of the Queen Empress, crowned and sceptred and pavilioned in aloof magnificence, had become suddenly human ; she visited her cottagers, she sketched, she went for picnics on the hill-side, she found it exceedingly difficult to boil the kettle, funerals had a fascination for her as for them, and she had told them all about this home-life of hers as if chatting to them personally. The mass of the nation had always been vastly loyal to her : on her rare appearances, during the period of eclipse, such as the Thanksgiving service for the recovery of the Prince

of Wales, she had been received by them with unbounded enthusiasm. And now she was getting on for seventy ; only the quite elderly could remember the days when she had not been Queen of England, she was the mother of many children, and had suffered many bereavements. Even her long seclusion, so highly unpopular at the time, intensified the national feeling about her, for during it she had become something of a legend : and now at her approaching Jubilee all these sentiments were focussed into a manifestation of personal loyalty and affection, which for the remainder of her life was to shine steadfast without eclipse. No King could ever have attained such a position, the fact that she was a woman was an essential part of it.

The Queen's public appearances in 1886 had not been more numerous than usual, but in the spring of 1887 she spent ten days at Buckingham Palace, a longer sojourn than she had ever made there since the death of the Prince Consort in 1861. The chief ceremony of the Jubilee was to be the Service in Westminster Abbey on June 21, and she felt it would be an ordeal, for emotional memories would be thick about her, and the service must not be too long "for the weather," she wrote to the Archbishop, "will probably be hot, and the Queen feels faint if it is hot." She had not entered the Abbey for any function since, as a girl of nineteen, she had been crowned there forty-nine years ago, and now she went to see the preparations for her Jubilee. There was the Coronation Chair set over the stone from Scone, just where she had sat before, and with her Lord Chamberlain and "the amiable little Dean Bradley" and officers of the Board of Works, she discussed all the arrangements and she hoped there would be "room for everybody and everything." Indeed the vigour of her young days had returned, for before she went back to Windsor that night she drove to Earl's Court, and saw Buffalo Bill's

"Wild West" and found it "very extraordinary and interesting." Three days later, up she came from Windsor again and drove in semi-state from Paddington through the City to Mile End where she opened the People's Palace. It was a progress of fifteen miles through crowded streets and, considering the mass of Socialists and "low bad Irish who abound in London," two or three of whom, she thought, went from place to place, in order to raise faint booings as she passed, her reception was most enthusiastic. She stopped at the Albert Docks, she had tea at the Mansion House, and two days afterwards received six addresses at Windsor, and the Maharajah of Kuch Behar and his wife came to stay for two nights. Any one of these engagements a few years before would have entailed bitter protests and long periods of rest before and after. She came up to London the morning before the Jubilee day. She greeted twenty Royal guests in the Picture Gallery and lunched with them. She gave many audiences afterwards, and more Royal guests arrived, and there was an immense dinner in the evening.

The Queen had quite made up her mind as to the personal appearance she would present on that day. Attempts had been made to induce her to wear robes of state : the last to try had been the Princess of Wales, who came out baffled from the Presence saying she had never received such a snub in her life. For she would have neither crown nor sceptre nor robes, nor would she drive in the monstrous gold coach, the swaying of which always made her feel rather unwell, but in a landau, alone on the back seat, with the Crown Princess of Germany and the Princess of Wales opposite her. There was a separate procession of Sovereigns ; a cavalcade of relations, three sons, five sons-in-law, nine grandsons and grandsons-in-law preceded her on horse-back, Princesses followed in carriages. The glittering lines

passed up the nave of the Abbey, and the central figure to whom all had come to do honour was a little old lady, walking slowly and leaning on a stick, dressed in black satin with a white front and a white bonnet with a black velvet band, and she had come to church to thank God for all His mercies to her and to the Realm over which fifty years ago He had called her to rule. Her eyes were dim when the *Te Deum* was sung, for Albert had composed it, and in the anthem there was incorporated his chorale "Gotha" which he had played to Mendelssohn on his new organ at Buckingham Palace nearly fifty years ago. Every moment and incident of this day she recorded in her Journal : home at a quarter to three, and lunch with all her Royal guests at four, and the presents she was given—the Queen of Hawaii's gift was a sort of picture : a wreath of rare feathers strangely arranged round her monogram also in feathers, stuck on to a black ground and framed—a great dinner, with Highland pipers playing and healths drunk, a reception of the Corps Diplomatique, and once more, as forty-nine years ago, she looked out at the illuminations in the Park.

Next day there were more deputations and more presents and before leaving London she attended a vast gathering of school-children in Hyde Park. She drove from Slough to Windsor and received two addresses at Eton, and gave a large family dinner. Before it was over the torchlight procession of Eton boys had arrived, and she hurried down to the Quadrangle and thanked them in as loud a voice as she could, so that they should all hear her. The town was illuminated, but she was too tired to go out again.

BEFORE the end of the month she went up to London once more. That morbid idea, once so real to her, that she was alone and desolate, that her subjects looked upon her as a

show had become like some preposterous dream barely remembered on awakening. Once more she drove through the roaring streets and gave a huge garden-party at Buckingham Palace. All her Royal guests, four Kings among them, were there, and next day, back at Windsor again, she received the Indian Princes as their Empress, and she invested some with the Grand Cross of India, and she knighted others, and one gave her a carved ruby set in diamonds, and another a great pearl from his puggaree, and another a young horse in a coat of mail. Then she passed through London again going to a garden-party given by Lord Salisbury at Hatfield, and on another day she laid the foundation stone of the Imperial Institute at Kensington, and, still in July, she reviewed a London Volunteer force in the garden at Buckingham Palace, and she held a review of troops at Aldershot, and of her Navy at Spithead.

At length there was a little quiet for her at Osborne, and with her dogs round her she breakfasted on the lawn under a great green umbrella, and when breakfast was done, she attended to the contents of the despatch-boxes from Governmental Departments, and when that was done one of her Indian attendants Munshi Abdul Karim came to give her a lesson in Hindustani: to know a little of the language brought her into better contact with the people of her Empire. When next she had Indian princes to receive she ventured on a sentence in their native tongue to greet them, and presented them to Princess Henry of Battenberg in the same language. Henceforth, and till the end of her life, she was waited on by Indian servants: one pushed her wheeled chair down the corridors at Windsor, and stood behind her at lunch and dinner, and whether at Balmoral or Windsor or Osborne, Munshi Abdul Karim gave her daily lessons in Hindustani. At Windsor he lived in Frogmore Cottage. Other Indian attendants occupied King

John's Tower, where they were allowed to kill and cook fowls with their native rites. A smell of blood and onions and curry reminded them of home.*

Two of the Queen's relatives, the Crown Prince and Princess of Germany, remained in England for nearly three months after the day of Jubilee. He had come to England not for the festival alone but to consult English doctors about an obstinate affection of his throat, which since the beginning of the year had rendered him hoarse and at times voiceless. German doctors had found that there was some suspicious, possibly malignant growth on one of the vocal chords and advised an operation, but they desired first to have the opinion of Dr. Morell Mackenzie as being the first authority in Europe on such a case.† Mackenzie removed a fragment of the growth, and sent it to the pathologist Professor Virchow, and as he pronounced that there was no sign of cancerous structure in it, advised against the operation, and hoped to cure the Crown Prince, by other treatment, in a few months. The German Doctors Gerhardt and Bergmann disagreed, and recommended tracheotomy, a serious operation, which, even if it is successful, leaves the patient voiceless. A bitter and inhuman struggle was waged for possession, so to speak, of the Prince's body.

The Emperor William I, now ninety years old, was failing, and the feeling in Germany was that his son ought to go back to Berlin in order to be near. Mackenzie on the other hand advised that after leaving England in September he should spend the autumn and winter in the south. The Crown Princess, as was only natural, held that her husband's recovery was the first and only consideration overriding all others. As she herself said, she fought for this

* Queen Marie of Roumania, *Story of My Life*, pp. 21, 22. *Letters*, III, i, pp. 331, 362. *Cust, King Edward and His Court*, p. 15.

† *Letters*, III, i, p. 311.

"tooth and nail," and it must be admitted that she employed both to the utmost. Anyone who dared to say that the fact that he was Crown Prince and likely soon to succeed made it his duty to be in Berlin, was "unjust and ignorant and spiteful and impertinent": she would have liked to be able to distribute a few *coups de poing* among them if they had been worth knocking down. But she got her way, and from England she and her husband went to Toblach and Venice and then settled at San Remo for the winter. There his disease began to make fierce inroads, and before long it was certain that the German doctors had been right from the first, and that the Prince was suffering from cancer. Fresh attacks from the German press followed: they asserted that the Crown Princess had stuck to Mackenzie's diagnosis, since, by the constitution of Prussia, no heir to the throne could succeed if suffering from some incurable disease which would render him incapable of discharging his functions as Sovereign. There was no such provision in the constitution, and such attacks must have been hideously exasperating.*

Meantime the bad relations between the poor harassed woman and her eldest son William, long existent, were growing far worse. He had remained in Berlin where the Bismarcks, father and son, and the old Emperor made much of him, and when he came to San Remo to see his parents, his mother reported him to the Queen as being "as rude and impertinent and disagreeable as possible." He had the "Emperor's orders," he said, "to see that the doctors were not interfered with, and to report to the Emperor about his Papa." † She gave him a good blowing up, and he behaved better, but the rift was widening fast. Already,

* Ponsonby, *Letters of Empress Frederick*, pp. 234, 248.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 256, 257.

when the imperial signature was required, Prince William signed for his grandfather. That was necessary, for it was impossible that State papers should be sent from Berlin to San Remo, but both he and his mother, the one with growing arrogance, the other with bitter forebodings, knew that the time was not far off when he would be signing for himself. Throughout the winter and the spring the Crown Prince's condition grew steadily worse. On March 9, 1888 the Emperor died, and Frederick III instantly returned to Berlin for his reign of ninety-eight days.

The death of the Emperor William was in no way a personal grief to the Queen. He had long identified himself with the policy of Bismarck which she detested, and she wrote in her diary, "for some years, alas, he was made a tool of for no good."* During all these years she had looked forward to the accession of her son-in-law, in the hopes that he, who was as firm a foe to Bismarck as herself, might establish a Germany more like that of which the Prince Consort had dreamed, a Germany strong but liberal-minded, a friend of peace and international amity instead of an armed aggressor. Now that day had come, but with how ironical a fulfilment, for the Emperor's days were already numbered, and the long period of wise and pacific government which it had been reasonable to anticipate, for he was only fifty-six, could never be realised. Alas, too, for the value of those close relationships between Royal Houses which should bind their countries together, for the feeling in Germany, encouraged by Bismarck, against the new Empress greatly embittered the national sentiment against England.

Another projected alliance accentuated this feeling, namely the engagement of Prince Alexander of Battenberg

* Letters, III, i, p. 390.

to Princess Victoria, daughter of the Emperor. Prince Alexander, in 1879, had been chosen for the throne of the new, independent principality of Bulgaria, with Russia's express approval. But his notion of Bulgarian independence had been too thorough for Russia's taste, and he had been kidnapped by Russian officers, and, though saved by the Tsar's intervention from death,* had been forced to abdicate. He was now living as a private individual in Darmstadt, being first cousin to the Grand Duke. Both of Princess Victoria's parents approved of the marriage, as being a love-match, and so also originally, did the Queen, who felt the most special and tender interest in the family. But Bismarck was strongly opposed to it; so also, under Bismarck's influence, was the new Crown Prince William, and there had been bitter quarrels already over it. Bismarck's objection to it was based on two grounds: the first was that the Battenbergs were only sons of a morganatic marriage, and therefore Prince Alexander was not a fit match for a daughter of the Emperor of Germany; the second was political. Prince Alexander in his seven years' rule in Bulgaria had rebelled against Russian control, and had been forced to abdicate. Such a marriage therefore would be regarded by Russia as an unfriendly act on the part of Germany. Bismarck had put these views to the Emperor William who had agreed with them, and he deduced from the Queen's advocacy of the marriage, a deep political plot of which the object was to estrange Russia from Germany. At the same time he had been afraid of the Queen's very powerful personality. Four years ago she had an idea of coming to Berlin for her daughter's birthday, and Bismarck had sincerely hoped she would not. "In family matters," he said, "she is not accustomed to contradiction, and would immediately bring the parson with

* Letters, III, i, p. 207.

her in her travelling bag and the bridegroom in her trunk, and the marriage would come off at once." *

With the death of the Emperor William, and with Princess Victoria's parents favourable to the marriage, the question came up again. But it had now acquired a very different significance, which the Queen's political wisdom fully recognised, and which had completely altered her view about the desirability of it. She was at Florence in this spring of 1888, at the Villa Palmieri, and she made up her mind to go to Berlin before returning to England to see her beloved son-in-law once more, and also by her presence to show her sympathy with her daughter. But Lord Salisbury, believing her still to be favourable to the Battenberg marriage, was very uneasy about the visit. He wrote to her, as she noted in her Journal, that Sir Edward Malet (British Ambassador at Berlin) had cyphered to him "that the proposed betrothal of young Vicky and Sandro (Prince Alexander) had put Bismarck in a perfect fury : that, as I was supposed to be favourable to it, he might vent his fury on me and England, and that my journey to Berlin might have to be prevented. I was very angry, as I had nothing to do with it ; on the contrary I had only warned Vicky against moving in the matter. I let Lord Salisbury know this, and that I would not give up going to see my poor sick son-in-law." †

This warning to the Empress Frederick had really been a prohibitive command. The Queen had telegraphed to her : "Don't contemplate marriage without the full consent of William. It would never do to contract a marriage he would not agree to." But Bismarck's interference in these family matters she found most impertinent, though in point of fact she now agreed with him. "Bismarck's tyranny"

* Ponsonby, *Letters of Empress Frederick*, pp. 202, 203.

† *Letters*, III, i, p. 399.

she told Lord Salisbury, "is unbearable." She would still 'have been glad for the young people to marry if they wished, *and* if the Imperial family welcomed such a proposal," but with William, who must soon be Emperor, against it, it was impossible. Moreover she had been told that Prince Alexander himself no longer wanted it. While he was reigning Prince of Bulgaria, it would have been politically useful to him. Now it was worth nothing, and he was believed to be having an affair (which eventually ended in marriage) with an opera-singer, Fräulein Loisinger.*

Lord Salisbury made yet another effort to stop the Queen going to Berlin. The German Ambassador in London, he told her, was strongly against her doing so, and had said there was some anxiety in high official circles there as to the meeting between the Crown Prince William and his grandmother. They were afraid "that if any thorny subject came up in conversation (*i. e.* the proposed marriage) the Prince might say something that would not reflect credit on him, and that if he acted so as to draw any reproof from your Majesty, he might take it ill, and a feeling would rankle in his mind which might hinder the good relations between the two nations." He reminded her "that all Prince William's impulses, however blameable and unreasonable will henceforth be political causes of enormous potency, and the two nations are so necessary to each other, that everything that is said to him must be very carefully weighed." †

The Queen had a very high opinion of Lord Salisbury's sagacity, but it was too ridiculous of him to tell William's grandmother how to deal with William. She left this

* Letters of Empress Frederick, pp. 298, 300.

† Letters, III, i, pp. 390, 398.

letter unanswered, and off she went in her special train from Florence to Berlin, primarily to see her poor son-in-law, and also to use her influence not, as Bismarck still supposed, in favour of the Victoria-Alexander marriage but against it. The Emperor of Austria, with her permission, had travelled seventy miles to have lunch with her at Innsbruck, and though she had a bad sick headache, they had a most satisfactory conversation and an affectionate parting. In the late afternoon the Queen Mother of Bavaria, and the Prince Regent met her at Munich with a bouquet of roses and a book in which she signed her name. She admired the scenery and the lovely *Alpenglühén* on the mountains, and then she worked till bedtime, travelled through the night, and arrived at Charlottenburg early next morning. Her amazing memory and fluent pen noted and recorded everything : the huge sentries with drawn swords for the reception of a Sovereign : her rooms once occupied by Frederick the Great, and never used since : her tidying of herself : a visit to Fritz in bed : breakfast with Vicky and her girls : an interview with Sir Morell Mackenzie : a very sad talk with poor Vicky : a drive into Berlin in the afternoon : a visit to the widowed Empress Augusta "quite crumpled up and deathly pale," a visit to Vicky's palace in Berlin, and a large family dinner of twenty-five persons. All this was on the day succeeding a journey of twenty-four hours with a night in the train : could it indeed be the same woman who, nearly twenty years younger, must rest at Osborne for ten days after opening Parliament ?

Bismarck had asked for an interview : she was quite willing to see "the unbearable tyrant," and fixed an hour on the following morning. But he was shaking with agitation at the thought of opposing what he still believed to be her wish about the marriage : he nervously enquired of her

secretary in what part of the room she would be : would she be sitting or standing ? * He could make fun of her when he was safe in England, and contemptuously speak of her as a match-making old woman, but when she was just the other side of the door, waiting for him, the fun evaporated, and left a thick sediment of terror. But he got in somehow, and she asked him to sit down, and she found him "amiable and gentle." They spoke of the international situation in Europe, of the tragic reason for her visit ; he agreed with her about the cruel position of the Empress Frederick, about the Crown Prince William's inexperience, and, finally, about the impossibility of the Battenberg marriage. Weeks ago she had made up her mind about that, and the idea that the Queen at this interview "was forced to realise the meaning of resistance to that formidable personage" is quite untenable.† He might say afterwards, in his usual style, that "Grandmamma behaved quite sensibly at Charlottenburg," ‡ but of the two persons present at that interview it was the Queen who was the formidable one. But she was kind to him, and he was much gratified by her signifying her wish to see his wife.

And then what about Lord Salisbury's fear that she would have a hostile reception in Berlin ? She went to see about that after lunch in an open phaeton with her daughter. The crowds and the enthusiasm were immense : flowers were showered on them, and there were loud cheers for the Empress which comforted the mother's heart. She had tea at the British Embassy, and talked to Princess Bismarck (very civil but elderly and masculine) and she drove to a Schloss of the Emperor's, and saw the English Church,

* Letters, III, i, p. 404 note.

† Strachey, *Queen Victoria*, p. 248. It must be remembered, however, that Mr. Strachey's brilliant account of this affair was written before the Queen's letters dealing with these years were published, and he inferred that Bismarck had made her give up the project.

‡ Letters of Empress Frederick, p. 302.

and had interviews till it was "a terrible scramble to be in time for dinner." In addition to the twenty-four Royalties of last night there were eighteen other guests, and she talked to most of them standing up. Next day there was a review of the Garde du Corps, and a march past and a presentation of the officers, and after dinner that night she took train for England.

The Emperor Frederick died on June 15, 1888 within a year of his splendid appearance at the Queen's Jubilee. Her grief at his loss, as for a son of her own, and her sympathy with her daughter were profound and poignant, and there was also alarm for the future. For thirty years he and his wife had prepared themselves for this reign which had proved to be three months of dying, and Germany, instead of being guided by a wise and moderate and liberal-minded Emperor was now in the hands of a Chancellor, ruthless and unscrupulous, and of a young man rash and inexperienced, and grotesquely but perilously intoxicated with the sense of his own power. The Queen had always had a soft spot for him (which her eldest son had not) and with his really sincere affection for her there had always been mingled a certain salutary awe. She wrote him a most tactful and discerning letter about his conduct towards his mother, shewing that she quite appreciated that the friction between them was not wholly to be blamed on him. She asked him to bear with her "if she is sometimes irritated and excited. She does not mean it so : think what months of agony and suspense and watching with broken and sleepless nights she had gone through, and *don't mind it.*" But she had added advice which concerned him as Emperor : she begged him, being in such deep mourning, not to pay visits to other Sovereigns till some months had passed. At that he forgot that he was a grandson and replied not only as a Brother but as an elder Brother :

"At the end of this month (July) I shall inspect the fleet, and take a trip in the Baltic, where I hope to meet the Emperor of Russia, which will be of good effect for the peace of Europe and for the rest and quiet of my Allies. . . I would have gone later if possible, but State interest goes before personal feelings, and the fate which sometimes hangs over nations does not wait till the etiquette of Court mournings has been fulfilled. And as I am quite *d'accord* with Prince Bismarck, I hope that much good will come of the proposed meeting : as I deem it necessary that monarchs should meet often and confer together to look out for dangers which threaten the monarchical principle from democratic and republican parties in all parts of the world. It is far better that we Emperors keep firm together etc. etc. . ." The soft spot in his grandmother's heart must have hardened, for without pause she telegraphed in cypher to Lord Salisbury : "Trust that we shall be very cool, though civil in our communications with my grandson and Prince Bismarck, who are bent on a return to the oldest times of Government." * Brother William's letter she seems to have left unanswered : it was best so.

Family relationships became exceedingly worrying. The Prince of Wales had hitherto treated his nephew perhaps too avuncularly, regarding him as an arrogant and ill-mannered young man, and now it was his turn to be put in his place by an Emperor. The row started at once, for the Prince, while attending the Emperor Frederick's funeral, seems to have asked Count Herbert Bismarck, whether, had he lived, he would have restored Alsace and Lorraine to France.† It was an ill-advised question, and certainly the Prince would have been furious if, shortly after his accession, the heir-apparent of Germany had asked

* Letters, III, i, pp. 429, 489.

† *Ibid.*, p. 489.

one of his Ministers what had been his mother's views about the Transvaal. This was reported to the Kaiser, no doubt with exaggeration, and next month, unveiling a monument to Prince Friedrich Karl, he replied to it : "There are people who have the audacity to maintain that my father was willing to part with what he, in conjunction with the late Prince, gained on the battlefield. We, who knew him so well cannot tolerate, even for a single moment, such an insult to his memory." * The allusion was unmistakable, but in case anyone had missed it, he made it clearer yet. In his tour to Monarchs, he was to pay a visit to the Austrian Emperor ; and the Prince of Wales, as he was going there about the same time, wrote to his nephew, the day before he made this speech, expressing a friendly hope that their visits would coincide. The Kaiser did not reply to him, but told the Austrian Emperor that he desired that there should be no foreign Royalties in Vienna while he was there. He also complained to Bismarck that the Prince treated him in private as an uncle treats his nephew and not as a mere Heir-apparent should treat an Emperor.

This got round to the Queen, and she wrote to Lord Salisbury about it in her very firmest style : "This is really too *vulgar* and too absurd as well as untrue, almost *to be believed*. We have always been very intimate with our grandson and nephew, and to pretend that he is to be treated *in private* as well as in public as "his Imperial Majesty" is perfect madness. *If he has such notions, he had better never come here.* The Queen will not swallow this affront." †

Lord Salisbury was rather alarmed at these frightful expressions. The Queen had already asked the widowed Empress Frederick to come and stay with her, which the

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 648.

† Letters, III, i, p. 439.

Kaiser would certainly regard as a protest against his unfilial treatment of her, and with this new friction added, he told the Queen that both he and the Prince of Wales thought that this visit had better be postponed, since national amity might really be imperilled. She became, if possible, firmer yet, and telegraphed to him : "You all seem frightened of the Emperor and the Bismarcks, which is not the way to make them better. Tell the Prince of Wales this, and that his persecuted and calumniated sister has been for months looking forward to this time of quietness. Please let no-one mention this again." As for William's horrid treatment of his mother she wished it to be widely known.*

It had been a sad year and a disturbing one. The Germans had been showing the most unfriendly spirit to England at Zanzibar, and William was rude and huffy, and the Queen was very much upset about the series of murders by Jack the Ripper in East London, and she thought they should employ more detectives ; and Abdul Karim went on leave to India and she had to study Hindustani alone ; and the President of the United States had dismissed the British Ambassador. A bright spot was that her relations with the Prince of Wales had been extremely good : again and again she noted in her Journal what "a dutiful and affectionate son he was to her." But at Osborne on the last day of the year, no-one felt like sitting up to see in the New Year 1889.

THIS distressing family quarrel had to be patched up somehow, and though in February the Queen wrote to the Prince of Wales that the Kaiser must not come to England at all this year since neither of them could meet him after his conduct to them both, means were found. Prince Christian was sent with an olive-branch in his pocket to Berlin,

* Letters, III, i, pp. 443, 447, 460.

and the Kaiser solemnly asserted that he had never refused to meet his uncle at Vienna. The Prince of Wales accepted this (though it was palpably untrue) and so did the Queen, who, in the hopes of making the patch capable of withstanding further wear, made William an Admiral of the British Fleet, and said he might come to Osborne in August. To wear the same uniform as Nelson, said the Kaiser, made him quite giddy, but he took up his new duties with great conscientiousness. The English Government had passed a Naval vote of £21,000,000 for a seven years' programme, and that met his approval, but presently he warned his grandmother that she must increase her Mediterranean fleet by seven new battleships. Later he revised this estimate and said that her Navy must be trebled, in order to meet the possible combination of America and France.*

The Queen stayed at Sandringham this spring : she always took a child-like delight in a play, and the Prince had got Henry Irving and his company to act "The Bells." She was thrilled, and wrote in her Journal how he had murdered a Polish Jew in a sledge and "had carried his secret about with him for thirteen years !" Then there were domestic affairs to discuss : the Prince's eldest daughter, Princess Louise, was to marry the Earl (created Duke) of Fife, and his elder son Prince Albert Victor was now twenty-five, and the delicate question of further grants for the maintenance of the Royal House had to be reopened. Gladstone, who had invariably been a staunch supporter of these grants, promised his support again, but there was a good deal of Radical opposition. A Committee of all parties in the House was appointed to consider the matter, and though the Queen was "quite horrified to see the name of that horrible lying Labouchere, and of that rebel Parnell" among its members, the "Prince of Wales's Children Bill" passed

* Letters, III, i, pp. 467, 500. Lec, Edward VII, p. 658.

by a sound majority, in spite of Labouchere's assurances to the House that the Queen was rich enough to provide amply for all her grandchildren. The Bill gave the Prince an additional £36,000 a year out of which he was at his own discretion to make provision for his children, and was really a very handsome endowment. He was extremely grateful to Gladstone for his support, but it is to be feared that the Queen had no such feelings.*

II

HER seventieth birthday came round ; she felt very far removed from those birthdays of her married life, but though the snows were white on her own head, and so much belonged to the past, it was now not the past in which her mind dwelt, but the future, and it was full of spring flowers and young growth. The Battenberg children, whom she adored, came to see her that day before she was up, and they sat on her bed, and gave her their presents, and wished her "Many happy returns, Gangan." They had lately had a new brother, but they were not pleased with him, and said "Won't kiss that !" She saw the Trooping of the Colours for the first time in her life, and telegrams and letters poured in on her in such numbers that she had not time even to read them all that day. She was very lame, and had a great deal of pain, but physical discomfort and nerves generally no longer worried her, and she went up to London for a garden-party at Marlborough House, and was wheeled about in her bath-chair. There was a very enterprising young lady among Bertie's guests, and she summoned her ladies to form a body-guard, "because," she said, "I see Mrs. — coming, and I know she will try to kiss me. . ." Next day she received the Shah of Persia at Windsor, and Abdul

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 499. Letters, III, i, p. 526.

Karim was back from India, and the Hindustani lessons could be resumed again under his tuition. Jean and Edouard de Reszke and Madame Albani came down to sing to her ; they were wonderful, and Jean reminded her of the inimitable Mario. Then down she went to Osborne, and the Family collected in force, and in some anxiety, for the coming of William.

Bygones were bygones, and almost feverish symptoms of family affection took their place. The Prince of Wales went out in the *Osborne* to meet the Imperial yacht *Hohenzollern*, and they steamed side by side through the great avenue of British ships assembled for the Naval Review. The Kaiser was in the uniform of Nelson, which had caused him such giddiness, and in order to show that Germany also could do something on the sea, he had no less than twelve German ships of war as his escort. He was most respectful and affectionate to his grandmother ; he breakfasted with her every morning and dined on five nights out of the six evenings of his visit, and they buried the past under a shower of distinctions. He conferred on her the office of Colonel-in-Chief of the Garde-Drögoner, and she duly wore the regimental colours on her shoulder, and he gave her a marble bust of himself in a helmet, and for Prince George of Wales there was the order of the Black Eagle. In turn the Queen invested his brother Prince Henry with the Garter, and gave Count Herbert Bismarck "a beautiful box" and sent his father a copy of Von Angeli's portrait of herself. But the bulk of entertainment fell on the Prince : he took his nephew to dine at the Royal Yacht Club and made him a member (which he lived bitterly to regret) : he went daily with him to the regatta : he escorted him on a prolonged inspection of the British fleet, and listened to the Kaiser instructing Captains and Admirals about naval guns. That seemed to have finished him off : he could stand no

more, and a bad knee prevented him from accompanying the Kaiser to a military review at Aldershot.

But the visit was a great success, and Lord Salisbury who was not given to incautious optimism told the Queen that it would tend "to bring back a happy family affection and peace." She found it restful to breakfast again quietly with her daughter and son-in-law, and she received a marvellous letter from the Kaiser from Baireuth where he had gone to talk to Frau Cosima Wagner about counterpoint. He assured his grandmamma that he took as much interest in the fleet as if it had been his own, and he reckoned that it and his own army were the surest guarantees of European peace. "But," said the War Lord, "should the Will of Providence lay the heavy burden on us of fighting for our homes, then may the British fleet be seen forging ahead with the German and the 'Red Coat' marching to victory with the 'Pomeranian Grenadier.'" Soon he sent her a satisfactory account of her Mediterranean Squadron. The men were handy and smart.*

The Queen's vigour and enterprise seemed to increase with years. This spring she had been to Biarritz and crossed the frontier into Spain to see the Queen Regent: never before had an English Sovereign set foot on Spanish soil. Then, after William's exhausting visit was over, instead of going straight up to Balmoral for prolonged repose, she went to North Wales and spent four days there in a house lent her near Lake Bala. She took the train to Llangollen (where, she remembered, nearly sixty years ago she had stayed for a night in an inn with her mother on one of those summer tours), and drove to the house of Sir Theodore Martin. It was the anniversary of the Prince Consort's birthday, and Sir Theodore showed her the table at which he had written that monumental "Life" in five volumes.

* Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 655, 656. Letters, III, i, pp. 520-527, 532.

A Welsh choir sang Welsh songs to her, and, just as she had spoken a sentence or two of Hindustani to a Maharanee, now, with child-like pleasure she learned up a few words of Welsh, and fired them off at a deputation which had presented her with a walking-stick. The Prince of Wales and his family, she thought, must really come to his principality ; it was only five hours from London, and the Princess had never been here at all, and these warm-hearted people felt that he neglected them. Hawarden was not far-off, and Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone had received a terse telegram of congratulation on their Golden Wedding Day a few weeks before, but Mrs. Gladstone's suggestion that the Queen should visit them at their home was not taken up. Her Secretary wrote to say how touched she was, and "how eagerly she had considered the possibility." But her time was too much occupied, and it could not be managed.*

Relief from any pressing political anxiety no doubt contributed to her serene vigour. She had come to trust Lord Salisbury on all matters that concerned the glory and the integrity of Imperial interests, even as she had trusted Lord Beaconsfield. He was at the helm, and he had a well-trained crew, and he would not set a perilous course nor yet a craven one, far less would he head for the dangerous reefs of Ireland, where the ship might easily be wrecked. With that pirate rather than pilot, Mr. Gladstone, still alive and endowed with a vigour even more remarkable than her own, there was no telling what the future might hold, but for the present Mr. Balfour was doing wonderfully well in Ireland, and during 1890 progress, though slow, was being made with the Irish Land Bill and the Tithe Bill. Later in the year the Parnell divorce suit split the Nationalists in two,

* Letters, III, i, p. 528. Lee, *Queen Victoria*, pp. 501, 502. Guedalla, ii, p. 432.

and such a result could not be regarded by the Queen as other than intensely gratifying, however deplorable the cause. Certainly there were proposed measures and reforms with which she did not agree : of these the report of the Hartington Commission upon the Army was one. It recommended that the War Office should be put on a similar footing with regard to the Crown as the Admiralty, and that the office of Commander-in-Chief should be abolished. To this latter the Queen violently objected, for it would be robbing the Crown of the most valuable prerogative "of *direct communication* with an immovable and non-political officer of high rank about the Army," while her cousin, the Duke of Cambridge, who held the post (and indeed merited the epithet "immovable") prophesied certain catastrophe both for the Crown and the Army if his office was abolished. But the scheme was shelved for the present, except that a Military Council to advise the Secretary of State for War, was created, of which the Commander-in-Chief was a member.*

Again the Queen did not at first at all approve of Lord Salisbury's scheme of securing from Germany the protectorate of Zanzibar and Somaliland in East Africa, at the price of ceding Heligoland to her. That threatened the integrity of her Empire, and she wrote to him : "It is a very bad precedent. The next thing will be to give up Gibraltar : and soon nothing will be secure, and all our Colonies will wish to be free." But she did not really think that anything of the sort would happen, for she knew that her Prime Minister was just as imperialistic as herself, and there was a great deal to be said for the exchange. Both countries would obtain what they much coveted without real loss, for Heligoland, unless strongly fortified, was quite useless to England, and causes of collision and friction with the

* Letters, III, i, pp. 551, 594, 600.

Germans in Zanzibar, which were becoming serious, would be removed. On the other side the acquisition of Heligoland would give great satisfaction to Germany, and particularly to the Kaiser who saw in it a defence for his projected Kiel Canal. So the exchange was made and the Kaiser who again came to Cowes in the summer of 1890, went home *via* his new island, and addressed his astonished subjects in his very best style: "Without a battle," he told them, "without the shedding of a tear this beautiful island has passed into my possession. . . I drink to the illustrious Lady to whom we are indebted for the transfer." *

Certainly it was a good thing that William should be so much beholden to this illustrious Lady, and nobody was more eager for that than the illustrious Lady herself. During the spring he had dismissed Prince Bismarck from his Chancellorship, or rather made it impossible for him not to resign it, and though the Queen had thoroughly disliked and distrusted "that unbearable tyrant," it was more than possible that his extinction was to be regretted, for he was at any rate a statesman of long experience, but what about uncontrolled William? William wrote to the Queen telling her, in justification of the dismissal, that his Chancellor's nerve was quite broken, that he burst out crying when they were in conference, that his doctor had said that he would infallibly have died of apoplexy if he had continued in office. But he acquiesced in what he called "the Lord's will," and added, rather significantly, "I have been educated politically by the Prince, and now I must show what I can do." His mother saw it from another angle. William wanted to have people who would "obey him, and carry out his orders." She considered him "a thorough despot," who was really "under the guidance of two or three fanciful favourites." That was probably the correct view: these

* Letters, III, i, pp. 612, 615, 621. Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 666.

fanciful favourites flattered him to the top of his bent, and while he imagined that, with the dismissal of Bismarck, he would be able to direct the policy of his country according to his Imperial will, he was, unknown to himself, passing into the control of Chauvinist Prussia, which eventually completely dominated him.*

In England the spirit of Imperialism continued mightily to flourish, and the Queen to expand with it. Cecil Rhodes, now Prime Minister of Cape Colony, came to England in the early spring of 1891, and, no doubt at Lord Salisbury's suggestion, was bidden to dine at Windsor. The Queen was much impressed by him : he was tremendously strong, absolutely anti-Republican, and he held the very agreeable conviction that England alone out of all the nations of the world knew how to colonize (poor Willie, who just now was very great on German colonizing !). And he had big ideas, ideas after her own heart, for he hoped to see the English rule extend from the Cape to Egypt. The protectorate of Zanzibar and the immense *Hinterland* was a very big link in that chain, and she had no more qualms about Heligoland. Already her new vassal the Sultan of Zanzibar had heard that she was lame, and asked if he might give her a crutch-handled stick for a birthday present. She thought that very kind and she promised to use it and think of him, and she was immensely interested in the details. It must not be too costly (perhaps her cypher in diamonds) and the length of it should be 34½ inches. She went down to Portsmouth, starting from Windsor in a thick fog, to launch the *Royal Arthur* and christen the *Royal Sovereign*. William had sent an Admiral and a battleship to represent him and a telegram of congratulation, timed to reach her at the hour of the ceremony, signing it in capital letters : "WILLIAM, GERMAN EMPEROR, KING OF PRUSSIA, ADMIRAL

* Letters, III, i, pp. 574, 589. Letters of Empress Frederick, p. 412.

OF THE FLEET." She walked up two flights of steps, she received the Mayor and the German officers and the Lords of the Admiralty. She lunched at Admiralty House, and how vivid were old memories ! The last time she had lunched here was thirty-one years ago, and before that, when she had launched the *Marlborough* (that was an unfortunate affair, as the ship stuck and would not take the water), and once again before that, when she was only fourteen and came here with her mother to see the Queen of Portugal. . . But now, in these memories, there was no aching remembrance of the past, no mention even whether Albert was with her on any of these previous visits : launching of ships, Imperial business was the important point.

She was enjoying life : she prayed that she might have some years more of it yet ; her Houses of Parliament under the present Government were working smoothly : "no bad language," she noted, "and excellent majorities." The Waterloo Gallery was used again for the performance of plays : Mr. D'Oyley Carte's Company gave *The Gondoliers* for her, and Mr. Hare played *A Pair of Spectacles* and *A Quiet Rubber* ; Munshi Abdul Karim had come back from his holiday in India, and every day he gave her a lesson in Hindustani and was very patient with her.*

In June this year (1891) there was the libel action in connection with the baccarat scandal at Tranby Croft, over which the English and indeed the Continental press made such a terrific and wholly disproportionate outcry. It was not a pleasant business for a son of hers to be mixed up in, and the publicity of the witness-box was disagreeable. The Queen was much vexed over this horrid affair, and felt herself obliged to tell him what she thought about it. In fact he got a good scolding and then no more was heard about it, and before long her Journal again recorded what a dear

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 4-18.

and affectionate son he was to her. The Kaiser, as might have been expected, was meddlesome, and wrote his Uncle a hortatory letter on the impropriety of his gambling with young men. This was unfortunate, for next month he and the Kaiserin were to pay their first state visit to England, and harmonious relations might be difficult to maintain. But all went well : they stayed four days at Windsor and five more at Buckingham Palace, and the Kaiser in a truly magnificent letter to his grandmother told her that what pleased him particularly was the "open approval by all thinking people of the unswerving and honest labour I am given to for the maintenance of peace and the development of good-will among all nations — *nota bene* as far as it is possible." *

There was a note of warning here ; and it was a symptom of the oncoming malady which presently gripped him. He was extremely eager for an Anglo-German alliance, but he knew that the conversations which his Foreign Minister, Marschall von Bieberstein had held with Lord Salisbury had not been very encouraging, he knew too that very soon after he left England the Prince of Naples, only son of the King of Italy was coming to Osborne, and, as the Queen subsequently observed : "Willie wants to be friends with us, but he does not want us to be friends with anybody else." Already he had a touch of what developed into a real obsession, namely his delusion that all Europe, under the lead of his perfidious Uncle Bertie, was in conspiracy to encircle Germany. Nor did he like the idea of the French fleet coming to Cowes next month. It had been at Cronstadt where the Tsar had been far more cordial than his Brother of Germany liked, and now the Queen was to welcome it to England on its way back to Cherbourg. Then there

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 48, 51. Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 587, 588.

arose a further complication. The Kaiser's brother Prince Henry of Prussia and his wife, Irene, daughter of Princess Alice, had already been invited to Osborne, and they would be there when the French fleet came. It was quite impossible that French officers and German Royalties should dine at the same banquet ; even Lord Salisbury, who had a touch of Gallio over such etiquettes saw that would never do, and suggested that Prince Henry should dine at the Yacht Club that night, or perhaps have his dinner in another room. The conundrum was solved by the Prince of Wales lending his yacht to his nephew and niece and they went for a cruise in the Channel (it was rather like taking the children for a nice walk) while the French fleet was there. When they had gone, Admiral Gervais came to pay his respects to the Queen, and in the evening there was a great dinner, and the Duke of Connaught proposed the health of the President of the French Republic, and the Queen herself stood up (though not quite liking it) while the republican *Marseillaise* was being played. Next day in the *Victoria and Albert* she passed through the saluting lines of the French and English ships, she had tea on board the French flagship, and when she got home to Osborne her grandchildren had got back from their nice walk, and nobody asked where the Queen had been in their absence. This visit, with all the Queen's courtesies, produced an extremely good effect in France, though not such a good one in Germany. The Kaiser was most vexed with the Tsar who had welcomed the French far too warmly at Cronstadt, and had not troubled to call on him when in the autumn he passed through Germany. He wrote to his grandmother telling her with some glee that the Russian loan had fallen flat, and that the famine among the peasants was getting worse and worse. That, with God's help, would tend to

keep Russia quiet ! * . . . Such an attitude was characteristic : if Russia was civil to France, she deserved all the misfortunes which could befall her.

* Letters, III, ii, p. 83.

CHAPTER XIX

I

THE Princess of Wales had been passing through a rather trying time, and she left England with her two younger daughters in the autumn of 1891 with the intention of spending some months abroad, first at Copenhagen and then with the new Tsar and Tsarina, her sister, in the Crimea. But she had to hurry home for her second son Prince George fell ill of typhoid fever. Those of Coburg blood were curiously susceptible to it : the Queen had had it as a child, the Prince Consort had died of it, the Prince of Wales and the Duke of Edinburgh had both nearly died of it, and Prince Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, had had it. Prince George got over it well, and while he was convalescing his elder brother became engaged to Princess Victoria Mary of Teck. The Queen thoroughly approved, for Prince Eddy was nearly twenty-eight, and it was high time he married, and she had a great affection for the young lady both for her own sake and because she was the daughter of her best-beloved of cousins, Princess Mary, Duchess of Teck. Perhaps there was a faint memory of the baccarat case and other recent domestic disturbances in her mind when she wrote to the Archbishop of Canterbury saying that the Princess was very charming "with much sense and amiability, and very *unfrivolous*, so that I have every hope that the young couple will set an example of a steady quiet life, which, alas, is not the fashion in these days." But grievous tragedy followed. When the Prince

was down at Sandringham for the celebration of his birthday on January 9, 1892, he caught a bad cold ; it proved to be influenza and he died of pneumonia five days afterwards.

The Queen felt his death very deeply, and only two months later her son-in-law the Grand Duke Louis of Hesse-Darmstadt died also. She went to Hyères in the spring, and came back through Darmstadt to see her orphaned grandchildren : a sad visit, full of memories. But once again that indomitable vitality asserted itself, and her letters dealt fervently with a sheaf of miscellaneous topics. The new coinage would not do at all : her crown was badly put on and her nose was too pointed. Mr. Chamberlain was very sound in his views about Egypt. The telegraphic and telephonic communications between light-houses and coast-guard stations must be improved. The "Access to Mountains Bill" if passed in its present form would completely ruin the privacy of the Highlands. There ought to be a closed time of six weeks during which all tourists should be excluded from deer forests. . . Yes : she agreed with Lord Salisbury that it would be terrible if her cousin Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria were murdered or driven from his country, and if it would have a good effect she would let him come and stay with her at Balmoral. . . But No ! She would not invite William to Osborne this year. If he wished (as he did) to come in his yacht for the Cowes Regatta he must stay on board, and it would be as well if her Ambassador at Berlin "could hint that these regular annual visits are not quite desirable."* A great range of topics, with her mind emphatically made up about each.

But the General Election was approaching and the Queen shared her Ministers' fears about the result. With Home

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 107, 125.

Rule in her mind she wished that "*some* of her views should be known to those who may *attempt* to form a Government, so that there should be no mistake on these subjects." The idea of Gladstone being Prime Minister again was a nightmare, "a most alarming look-out," and Lord Salisbury's opinion that his passions had become more imperious while he had outlived his judgment, was not reassuring. She had hoped that possibly Lord Rosebery might take his place, but he had behaved shockingly. He had made so Radical a speech at Edinburgh that it really might be called communistic, had furiously attacked Lord Salisbury, and had rendered himself impossible. Or there was Sir William Harcourt, "but he would command neither respect nor confidence." As for other posts, she said she would positively refuse to accept either Sir Charles Dilke or Mr. Labouchere as members of the Cabinet, and Lord Ripon must not have anything to do with India. She anticipated a great deal of trouble, and with her in this mood any Gladstonian Government might confidently anticipate no less.* But whether or no Mr. Gladstone had outlived his judgment, he had certainly not outlived his vigour or his prestige. The Election went against the Government, and Gladstonians and Irish Home Rulers combined formed a majority of 355 to 315. The Queen gave an unusual publicity to her private views by the announcement in the Court Circular that she had accepted Lord Salisbury's resignation "with much regret," and expressed her feelings to Lord Lansdowne on the sad necessity of asking Mr. Gladstone to form a Ministry with equally unusual clarity: "The danger to the Country, to Europe, to her vast Empire which is involved in having all these great interests entrusted to the shaking hand of an old, wild and incomprehensible

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 119, 120, 126.

man of 82½ is very great ! It is a terrible trial, but thank God, the country is sound, and it cannot last." *

So once more the deplorable association between these magnificent and incompatible personages was renewed. It was some consolation to the Queen that the Prince of Wales induced Lord Rosebery to accept office as Foreign Minister, for, disgraceful though his Edinburgh speech had been, he was in line with Lord Salisbury over international relations, and he might be trusted to maintain England's position. But she took the result of the elections as iniquitous, and due to "unfair and abominable misrepresentations," her new Ministers were "greedy place-seekers" and there was scarcely a point of politics in which she saw eye to eye with her Prime Minister. In consequence his audiences with her became a farce, and he bitterly enumerated the neutral subjects which formed the bulk of their conversations. "From them," he commented, "may be gathered in some degree the terms of confidence between H. M. and her Prime Minister . . . she instinctively avoids points of possible difference. But then it seems that such are now all points." That was no doubt the case : Gladstone stood for all that she personally believed spelled ruin for the State, so where was the use of discussing such subjects at all ? Better to speak of the London fogs, of the fittest successor to Lord Tennyson as Laureate, of Mrs. Gladstone's nephew and such uncontroversial topics for the twenty minutes or half an hour which must elapse before the Queen could decently signify that the audience was over.† He sent her one of his reasoned and ponderous memoranda about Home Rule, which, as it stood first in her Prime Minister's legislature, might fitly engage their joint attention, but where was the use of talking about it,

* Guedalla, *Queen Victoria and Gladstone*, ii, p. 70.

† Guedalla, ii, p. 72.

since it was anathema to her ? She found it "very curious" and her Secretary was instructed to inform him that "she appreciates the motives which have induced him to lay his views before her." A fortnight later she told him that until the provisions of the Bill he was framing were known, the expression "Home Rule" was empty of meaning "and the Queen has consequently found it impossible to follow the arguments used by Mr. Gladstone." * A further memorandum followed, and an audience at which the dangerous subject was not even alluded to. He was suffering from sleeplessness, and in view of "his approaching labours" in the spring session of 1893—a grimness must have spread over the Royal features as she read this letter—he humbly prayed her permission to go out to Biarritz, on his doctor's insistence, for the Christmas holidays. A week later he had to remind her of his unanswered petition.

Now without doubt the Queen's kind heart must have been sorry that Mrs. Gladstone's husband was so deaf and so sleepless, but she had no spark of sympathy with her Prime Minister's afflictions, and we must always bear this distinction in mind if we are tempted to condemn her as inhuman towards a venerable and noble old gentleman. To her Prime Minister she was implacable, and she would not admit to her consciousness (or rather kept it in a sealed compartment) that the man himself was the most loyal and faithful of her servants, that he had devoted his life to what he conscientiously believed to be for the welfare of her realm, and that he was wearing himself out in her service. To her he was an enemy and a peril to her Empire.

He came back from Biarritz in January 1893, much restored, and friction was at once resumed. Lord Cromer, Consul General at Cairo, had been sending disquieting re-

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 176, 189, 191.

-ports about the new young Khedive, Abbas II, who was behaving rather in the manner of William of Germany, and he wanted more troops sent out to Egypt. Lord Rosebery supported the request, telling the Queen that to send reinforcements now might obviate the necessity of sending an army hereafter. But it seemed monstrous to her that the Cabinet should want to examine the situation at all before giving orders for the despatch of troops, and she confided to her Journal: "It is to me inconceivable that a handful of men sitting in a room in London, the greater part knowing little about Egypt, should pretend to say whether there is danger or not," and she wrote to Gladstone once more reminding him that the fall of Khartoum and the fate of Gordon were due to the hesitancy of his Government before.*

Such an incident was typical of the radical hostility which the Queen displayed to her Prime Minister, and instances multiplied. Gladstone submitted to her the draft of the Speech from the Throne, and she objected to the Home Rule Bill being described as a "Bill for the better Government of Ireland": "better" must be omitted. The Bill passed its first reading, and she wrote to him of her "anxiety and apprehension about a measure which tends towards the disruption of the Empire." The Suspensory Bill, preliminary to the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Welsh Church, was introduced, and she told him that he had not given her a frank explanation of it. It was clearly a first step, as Mr. Asquith had admitted, towards the Disestablishment of the Church of England "of which *she* is the Head, and of which she always thought Mr. Gladstone was a *loyal member*." Then there was a deplorable scene in the House of Commons over the Irish Bill, in which Mr. T. P. O'Connor, called Mr. Chamberlain "Judas," and several

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 203-215.

members indulged in fisticuffs. That, too, the Queen laid at Gladstone's door : did he not think that the "excitement and irritation" produced by the forcing through of a measure repugnant to the British nation by means of a small Irish majority was the "cause of such unseemly violence" ? Such taunts as her allusion to Gordon, or the sneer that she had always thought her Prime Minister a loyal member of the Church of England, were, it must be confessed, in bad taste and wanting in common courtesy : she, being a woman, permitted herself to be rude to a man, whose sense of chivalry and whose devoted loyalty to the Throne forbade him to retort or even to protest. All that can be said is that she genuinely considered him a public enemy. Politically the only bright spot was that the Lords would throw out this "foolish and terrible" Home Rule Bill.*

The Queen was seventy-four this year, and when her "poor old birthday," as she henceforth termed it, came round, it was a very happy one, in spite of these political tempests, and she wished she was ten years younger. There were grandchildren with her who acted *tableaux* for her, and that of "Grandmamma's Birthday" almost moved her to tears. A domestic event had happened which gave her very great and personal pleasure, and in which she had had a considerable hand : Prince George of Wales, now Duke of York, was betrothed to Princess Mary of Teck, whose engagement to his elder brother had been so tragically terminated a little more than a year ago. The Queen came up to London for the ceremony in July, and on the day before attended a gigantic garden party at Marlborough House, recking nothing of the terrific heat, and brought herself to say a cordial word or two to Mrs. Gladstone's husband. There was a great family dinner — she now enjoyed such functions very much — and the King and Queen of Den-

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 217, 227, 233, 279, 291.

-mark, grand-parents of the bridegroom, were there and the Tsarevitch who was so like the bridegroom that people mistook one for the other. Next day was the wedding, and she drove in the new State coach with glass sides up Constitution Hill and along Piccadilly and down St. James's Street to the Chapel Royal. By some mistake in the timing of the processions she got there first, and much appreciated the unusual experience of being kept waiting, because she saw the others arrive. Over fifty-three years ago — how vivid and far away were those days — Albert and she had been made man and wife on that self-same spot, and thirty-five years ago her beloved Vicky had stood there. But now, as an old woman, she was living for the future, full of vivid hopes and fears, whereas thirty years ago she was mourning for the past.*

In September the long looked-for moment came, and the Lords threw out her Prime Minister's Home Rule Bill by the immense majority of 419 against 41 : for the rest of the Queen's reign that spectre was laid. But another (she was on the lookout for Gladstone's spectres) outlined itself before the year was out, taking the form of the inadequacy of the British fleet. She wrote an alarmist letter to Gladstone : did the Cabinet realize that Russia and France were in very cordial relations and that they were both most unfriendly to England ? That harassed old gentleman could not immediately have a Cabinet meeting to consider her letter for two of his colleagues were away, and he was taking a holiday of a few days. So his Secretary, Sir Algernon West, replied to hers, and the Queen said that apparently Sir Algernon was her Prime Minister's *alter ego*, and when her Prime Minister answered that the Cabinet would certainly follow all the recommendations of the Admiralty (what could a Government do more ?) she only found his

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 272-275.

reply "peculiarly tricky." What made it more so was that Lord Rosebery had told her that he, in opposition to the rest of the Cabinet, opposed the increased Naval estimates.* She seldom now wrote directly to her Prime Minister : most of these criticisms were conveyed through her Secretary.

One more piece of bickering brought this unhappy association of two very great personages to a close. The Queen wished to confer a Dukedom on Lord Lansdowne on the conclusion of his term of Viceroyalty in India, or, if he did not wish to accept that, the Garter. Gladstone could not agree with either of these propositions : he and the Cabinet colleagues whom he had consulted thought that the Grand Cross Extraordinary of the Order of the Bath would be ample and appropriate, adducing precedents. She replied that so minor an Order would be almost an insult, and would sooner not give Lord Lansdowne any distinction at all. Her personal hostility flashed out again, and she added that this ignoring of Lord Lansdowne's services would "be considered by the world as a marked expression of *party* hatred which has *never* been yet expressed in this manner by any of her Prime Ministers." †

Early in January, 1894, Mr. Gladstone went out once more to Biarritz and from there sent her his last long memorandum. He repudiated the suggestion that party feeling entered into Lord Lansdowne's case at all, he cited more precedents, he argued, and he reminded her that whereas he recommended that the G. C. B. (Extraordinary) should be conferred on Lord Lansdowne, the G. C. B. (ordinary) had not been offered to himself till he had served in three Cabinets and had been in political life for more than a quarter of a century. But on returning to London he withdrew his opposition, and she told him that she was glad

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 329, 332.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 341-347.

he had done so, though very tardily. As for his reference to his own case she wrote that she could not "for a moment understand or agree that political party services can be considered to be equal to great political services to the Sovereign and Country." *

The end had come. He wrote to her that he proposed to resign office on grounds of physical disability, and then tendered his resignation in person. He was very old, she recorded, and very deaf, and he said his eyes were getting rapidly worse. She asked him to sit down, and said "she was sorry for the cause of his resignation," which was sufficiently explicit. There were a few words about honours, some neutral topics, and the audience was over. But how bitterly he must have felt the rancour of her frigidity may be gathered from what happened when, three days later, he and Mrs. Gladstone went down to dine and sleep at Windsor before his last Council. The Queen saw Mrs. Gladstone, and recorded the interview: "She was very much upset, poor thing, and asked to be allowed to speak as her husband 'could not speak.' This was to say with many tears, that whatever his errors might have been 'his devotion to your Majesty and the Crown were very great.' She repeated this twice, and begged me to allow her to tell him that I believed it, which I did; for I am convinced it is the case, though at times his actions might have made it difficult to believe." Yet still he could not understand that she meant to part with him without a single word of recognition for over fifty years of strenuous service, and though he had already handed in his notice of resignation, she had not formally accepted it, and he wrote once more. He thanked her for her "condescending kindness" to him. Though at the age of eighty-four he considered that he was mentally capable of continuing his official life, his deafness

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 349, 351, 357.

was a handicap to his work not only in the House, but in the Cabinet, and the cataract from which both his eyes suffered prevented his reading anything with the ease and swiftness necessary for the transaction of his public duties. But she had no intention of giving him another interview, and replied that she had taken leave of him already. He was right, she thought, at his age to seek retirement, and wished him the enjoyment of "peace and quiet, with his excellent and devoted wife, in health and happiness and that his eyesight may improve."* That iron vein of sincerity, so admirable a quality in itself, would not allow her to give a word of personal thanks to the man who, she was convinced, had shewn himself again and again a danger to her Empire.

The Queen offered the post of Prime Minister to Lord Rosebery without apparently consulting or notifying Mr. Gladstone, and went off to spend a few weeks in Florence. The Archbishop of Canterbury was there, and though he was a great personal friend of Mr. Gladstone's, she could not restrain her jubilant scorn about his resignation: "Mr. Gladstone," she told him, "has gone out, disappeared all in a moment. His last two ministries have been failures, indeed, his last three. . . He cares nothing for foreign affairs, which are always essential to England. Knows nothing of foreign affairs and exceedingly distrusted on the Continent. They have thought he might abandon Egypt any moment. He will not attend to any suggestions but his own mind's. He does not care what you say, does not even attend. I have told him two or three facts of which he was quite ignorant, on foreign tone and temper. It makes no difference. He only says 'Is that so? Really?'"† But though he had disappeared all in a moment, he might

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 372, 373.

† Archbishop Benson's Diaries.

still have some influence with others, and she was soon telegraphing to him hoping that "his friends" would rally round her and oppose that frightful Mr. Labouchere's motion for reducing the annuity of £25,000 granted by Parliament to her son the Duke of Edinburgh, who had succeeded to the Dukedom of Coburg in the previous year. It had been wonderful to think that "my child, our son, was now the reigning Duke or foreign sovereign," and how monstrous to wish to dock the grant which Parliament had given him as a British Prince. As usual, Mr. Gladstone was loyal in support of Royal finances, and promised to vote and speak if there was any danger.*

From Florence the Queen went to Coburg in excellent and indefatigable spirits for a Royal gathering so large that even her pen failed at the full enumeration of the "endless numbers" of Princes and Princesses, and after recording a good many, wrote "etc." It was close on fifty years since, with Albert, she had first visited the Duchy, and seen his birthplace at Rosenau and the theatre of his boyhood, and vivid to her now was his joy in taking her about, when, head of this magnificent European matriarchate, she saw the sacred and familiar places for the last time. Two purposes had brought her here; she would be the guest of her son and Albert's reigning in his own principality, and she would attend the marriage of two of her grandchildren, Princess Victoria Melita of Coburg and Ernest Grand Duke of Hesse, son of her daughter Alice. Then, most unexpectedly, her matriarchate was likely to be magnificently enlarged, for the day after this marriage the Tsarevitch Nicholas of Russia and yet another grandchild, Princess Alix of Hesse, sought audience and told her that they were engaged. She was "quite thunderstruck"; Russia was so far away, and there was the question of religion, and it seemed impossi-

* Guedalla, ii, pp. 499, 500. Lee, *Queen Victoria*, p. 365.

ble that "gentle little simple Alicky should be the great Empress of Russia," but before the year was out the death of Tsar Alexander III had brought that to pass. Then there was that other grandchild, William. The Prince of Wales had often urged her to give him military rank in her Army, and she had been strongly opposed to it: he was an Admiral already and had poured advice on her about her Navy, and if she did that he would want to interfere with her Army as well. But she yielded, and made him Colonel-in-Chief of the 1st Royal Dragoons. He was "moved, deeply moved" to think that he could wear "the traditional British Redcoat" as well as the uniform of Nelson, and looked forward to a happy meeting at Osborne, having quite failed to realize that these annual visits were not desirable.*

Yet another extension of the matriarchate occurred in June of this year 1894, when the Duchess of York gave birth to her first son. Never had the Queen been so full of self-imposed activities: she opened the new Manchester Ship Canal on her way up to Balmoral, she entertained the Tsarevitch and his fiancée and the ill-fated Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Windsor, she stayed a night at the Pavilion at Aldershot and saw a torchlight procession, Duse played *La Locandiera* for her, and the De Reszkes sang: the Kaiser came for the Cowes week, and attended a military review and felt that he truly belonged to the "thin Red Line of England." One thing alone troubled her personally, for her eyesight was beginning to fail. She found the reading of despatches difficult: she complained that her Ministers wrote with pale bad ink and very small handwriting, and Lord Rosebery was the worst offender. Years ago Lord Palmerston had insisted on all drafts and despatches being in a good round distinct hand, and that must

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 394-396, 454. Lee, King Edward, i, pp. 675, 676.

be enforced. Probably it was the only doctrine of Lord Palmerston's with which she had ever been in complete agreement.*

II

BUT politically all was not so well, and Lord Rosebery was an offender in more important matters than poor handwriting. He had been very unwilling to take office, foreseeing that he would be confronted with innumerable difficulties in carrying on the Liberal tradition and yet satisfying his Sovereign, and these difficulties began at once to present themselves. The chief of them was the reform of the House of Lords. The Queen had laid down the lines for his guidance at once: "The House of Lords might possibly be improved, but it is *part and parcel* of the *much vaunted and admired British Constitution* and CANNOT be *abolished*. It is the ONLY REAL independent House." Lord Rosebery agreed with a difference, and embodied his views in a long memorandum which he sent out to the Queen, then in Florence. He had always been in favour of a second Chamber, though an advocate of Reform, but as matters stood at present the House of Commons, an elected Chamber representing the views of the country, "was liable to be controlled by another Chamber, not elected in any sense, not representing anybody, and one hereditary in its character. . . It is easy to understand how galling this House is to the party to which it happens to be opposed. When the Conservative party is in power, there is practically no House of Lords: it takes whatever the Conservative Government brings it from the House of Commons without question or dispute: but the moment a Liberal Government is formed, this harmless body assumes an active life, and

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 408-424, 458, 459.

its activity is entirely exercised in opposition to the Government. Therefore while the Conservative Party is in, we have not the control of a second Chamber, but when the Liberal Party is in, it has to encounter not merely the control, but also the determined hostility of this body." *

The difference then between the Queen and her Prime Minister was evidently greater than their agreement, for a House of Lords reformed to an extent that would satisfy Lord Rosebery would surely not be a House of Lords at all in the Queen's sense of the word, for what (she asked him) was the use of the second Chamber which he favoured, if it was only to say "yes" to revolutionary legislation which a small majority might force through the House of Commons? Then the difference widened: he pointed out that he was shut up in a House that was almost unanimously opposed to the policy of Mr. Gladstone's Government to which he was pledged as having held office in it, and that for political purposes he might as well be in the Tower of London. The leader of the House of Commons (Sir William Harcourt) was quite indifferent to the fate of the Government, and if he himself was to exercise any weight, his only course was to speak (though he hated speaking) in the country. She agreed that he had inherited "dangerous almost destructive measures from his predecessor," but as regards his speeches out of Parliament, could he not take a more serious, a less jocular tone? He was so clever, she told him, that perhaps he was carried away by his sense of humour. And she thoughtfully congratulated him on his horse Ladas winning the Derby.†

There for the present the matter dropped, but it had to be renewed again before the meeting of Parliament in the autumn, and differences became so acute that all agreement

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 386-388.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 399, 404.

vanished. Lord Rosebery warned her that a declaratory resolution must be moved in the House of Commons, that the elected representatives of the people "could not allow their measures to be summarily mutilated and rejected by the House of Lords." A general election would have to show the will of the country about that : if it voted for the Liberals there must follow "a complete reform of the House of Lords, and a revision of its relations with the House of Commons." * That alarmed the Queen so much that having told him that such a resolution was tampering with the Constitution, she did not scruple to send her Prime Minister's letter to Lord Salisbury, asking him whether she should not warn Lord Rosebery that the Cabinet must not bring forward such a resolution without finding out, by a General Election, whether the country was in favour of it. She therefore wished to know whether the Unionist party was ready for a dissolution now. Marking this letter "very private" hardly excused such a portentous irregularity, and she followed it up by another asking whether he, Mr. Balfour, the Duke of Devonshire and Mr. Chamberlain would agree to her insisting on a dissolution. Lord Salisbury "had misgivings that so many *written* disseminations of what had passed might not be free from a certain risk of indiscretion," and advised waiting till conversations could be held with these statesmen of the Opposition, so that no written communications would be necessary.

Meanwhile Lord Rosebery had piled Pelion on Ossa by making an extremely violent speech at Bradford against the Lords without submitting his intention to the Queen, and a few weeks afterwards at Glasgow by announcing that the Bill for the Disestablishment of the Scotch Church could not be proceeded with in the present Session. It had already been foreshadowed in the Speech from the Throne

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 429, 430.

in Gladstone's last Administration, and the postponement of it threatened to alienate its supporters from the Government. The Queen thought it deplorable of him even to have contemplated introducing the Bill at all, and acidly reminded him that at her Accession she had sworn to maintain the Protestant religion, which definitely included the Presbyterian church of Scotland : perhaps he had forgotten that, or perhaps he never knew it. But if sarcasm was going about, he could beat her for suavity, and having pointed out that he never imagined it possible that the postponement of a measure which was obnoxious to her could incur her displeasure, concluded that he must surely be "the most unlucky, the most maladroit of Ministers." He had already told her that he was perfectly willing to resign, and there, in a way, he had the whip-hand of her, for the Conservatives for whom she longed were not ready to take the field yet, and she was frightened that his resignation might result in a more revolutionary leadership. In fact it was he presently who had to comfort her, and in a most remarkable audience, which must have been unique in her experience, he assured her that the Resolution about the House of Lords which she had thought so perilous would come to nothing, and that the dissolution which must follow would bring in the Conservatives. Naturally he could not give such discouragement to his colleagues, and this was only for her private ear. Three days after she sent for Lord Salisbury, and, whether she gave him some hint about this conversation or not, they talked very comfortably over the failure of poor Lord Rosebery to agitate the country about the House of Lords.*

The Government was certainly losing hold, and conscious of that, Lord Rosebery, before the opening of Parliament in the spring of 1895, supplied the Queen with further

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 437, 446, 455.

pleasant news by telling her that he thought they would be defeated on the Address. They pulled through that, but refused to bring forward the Resolution against the Parliamentary control by the House of Lords, and the Prime Minister himself, cruelly harassed by insomnia, was really only marking time till his release came.

One more piece of business, disagreeable to the Queen, had to be put through, namely the retirement of her cousin the Duke of Cambridge from his post as Commander-in-Chief. He had held it since the Crimean war, and continually resisted every sort of Army reform : promotion, for instance, in his view ought to depend entirely on seniority irrespective of ability, and he judged the efficiency of a regiment by the brightness of its buttons. He clung with extreme obstinacy to his position, for he considered himself an essential link between the Army and the Crown, and she found it a hateful task to convince him of the contrary, partly because he was an old man and her cousin, partly because she sympathised with his idea of the Royal connecting link. But blood was thinner than the need of reform, which would never come while his obstructing presence was there, and she had a personal interview with him to try to persuade him to resign. Quite useless, though he would not mind "being assisted by some kind of board." So there was nothing to be done, but to write him a letter saying that she requested his resignation. This was announced in the House of Commons on June 21, and that same evening the Government were defeated over a motion about the insufficient reserve of cordite. Next day, Lord Rosebery, who had just won the Derby again with Sir Visto, resigned too. He frankly told the Queen that it would be an immense relief to give up an office saddled with the unfortunate inheritance bequeathed by Mr. Gladstone : the only thing which he regretted was the severance

of his personal relations with her. Though the measures he had hoped to carry were repugnant to her, he had the merit of having failed, and they parted on the friendliest terms with a rather touching hope on her side "that he would not forget her." She reminded him, very ingeniously, that, being no longer in office, he was quit of that Gladstonian inheritance, and hoped he would refrain from "strong expressions" in the future.* The elections that followed in July were fought over Home Rule, Liberal Unionists sided with Conservatives, and a sweeping victory was the result. With Lord Salisbury once more as her Prime Minister, who remained in office till the end of her life, the Queen had a Government with whose policies both at home and abroad she was in complete sympathy.

A new Royal visitor to Windsor in July was Prince Nasrulla Khan, son of the Ameer of Afghanistan, from whom he brought for the Queen a prodigious present of textiles, forty shawls and eight hundred rugs. In turn the Ameer asked, through his son, whom the Queen, he said, had treated like a Mother, if he might have an accredited agent in England, who would let him know from time to time how she was.† Then in August the Kaiser paid his promised visit to Cowes. It might be described as "the last and the worst," for he never came again, and was quite odious. His first exhibition of tact was to bring with him his two new cruisers, the *Wörth* and the *Weissenburg*, christened in memory of two German victories in Alsace, and on the anniversary of the battle of Wörth he addressed the crew of that ship on the all-conquering German army. He was certainly most desirous of bringing about an alliance with England, and it must be supposed that he thought this insult to a nation on friendly terms with his English hosts was a

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 522, 524, 533, 534.

† *Ibid.*, p. 532.

piece of adroit diplomacy. The English press misunderstood it, and thought he had behaved with gross bad taste.

Then he sent a command to Lord Salisbury, now Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary, to visit him on the *Hohenzollern*. Lord Salisbury, owing to some mistake, was an hour late, and, instead of a friendly talk, the Kaiser abused him for his anti-German sentiments. Both Lord Salisbury and the Queen were doing their best to please him by appointing Lord Wolseley as British Ambassador at Berlin, which the Kaiser particularly wished, but Lord Wolseley, having now been offered the post of Commander-in-Chief in the place of the Duke of Cambridge, preferred the latter, and the Kaiser's disappointment took the form of temper. In the matter of diversions he was just as hard to please, and his rudeness to his uncle was really remarkable. His yacht the *Meteor* was to compete in the Queen's Cup against the Prince of Wales's *Britannia*, but not being satisfied with the handicap he scratched her. In the presence of English folk aboard the *Hohenzollern*, he called his uncle "the old peacock," and asked him if he had ever seen military service, and he tried, unsuccessfully, to run the Royal Yacht Squadron of which the Prince was Commodore. It was a very trying time for the Family, and the Kaiser felt deeply hurt at the coldness with which England had met his friendly gestures. He said, on his return to Germany that "he had done with her," and hoped that the Queen would stop the publication of *Punch*.*

Like telephone-calls from remote lands came communications on Imperial interests, and to these the Queen always gave her personal attention. Slatin Pasha came to see her, and that was a reminder of the still unvindicated disaster in the Sudan. He had been in captivity since the taking of Khartoum by the Mahdi nearly eleven years ago, and he had

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 544-550. Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 670-678.

grim tales of being shewn Gordon's severed head, and of his own months in chains. During his captivity he had managed to supply very valuable information to the authorities at Cairo, and after his escape Lord Cromer, realizing his potential value, had secured him for the Intelligence Department. Three Christian chiefs from Bechuanaland had come to England, and they said that long expensive journey would be short to them if they might see their mother the Great Queen. So Mr. Chamberlain, her new Colonial Secretary, once so rabid a Radical but now so stalwart an Imperialist, brought them down to Osborne, and they made the petition that the Government would allow them to suppress the sale of alcohol. Numerous and sometimes slightly embarrassing had been these Imperial embassies of late years. There had come Singalese with long hair done up like a woman's with tortoiseshell combs : Red Indians from Canada in full feathers : Bushmen who asked to play their pipes to the Queen : Indians who sat down and sang to her : Burmese who laid themselves prostrate on the floor, and remained there so long that she had to tell them to get up : Matabele men who told her that she could make the weather hot or cold, and the Queen received them all.

Twice within the last year she had seen Mr. Rhodes again, and had been more struck with him and his Imperial outlook than ever, and she made him a Privy Councillor. Since she had seen him in 1891, he had added 12,000 square miles to her dominions, and he thought that the Transvaal should never have been given up, but that we should get it again. The Germans, he said, were causing difficulties, and he repeated that they did not know how to colonize. It was a small matter perhaps that Paul Kruger, President of the Transvaal State had sent a birthday message to the German Emperor that Germany and the Transvaal must be the closest friends, but that was the sort of thing that

made him do something silly and dramatic. And there were serious difficulties out there ; for instance, the British Uitlanders in the gold district of the Witwatersrand now outnumbered the Dutch, and yet they had no votes, and thus no political existence. There was sure to be trouble about that sooner or later.*

Then an expedition must be sent to Ashanti to stop the slave-raids into the British Gold Coast, and here Imperial interests touched the Queen's domestic life. Princess Beatrice's husband, Prince Henry of Battenberg, the best beloved of all her sons-in-law, who lived with her, and whose presence had brought her such daylong domestic sunshine, wanted to go out with it. He had had a military training, both his brothers had seen active service, but since his marriage, over ten years ago, he had had no sort of employment. The expedition was of volunteers, and thus he would be taking no one's place ; he was a young man still, and it was no wonder that he should want it to be seen that his desire was to be of service to England if opportunity presented itself. At first the Queen would not hear of it. The climate was bad and she invoked a doctor's opinion. But the Prince was a very healthy man, and he and his wife were agreed, and very reluctantly she yielded. He had hardly gone when the still terrible anniversary of December 14 came round for the thirty-fourth time, and that very morning the Duchess of York gave birth to a second son. It was strange, the Queen thought, that he should be born on that day. . †

* Letters, III, ii, pp. 455, 463, 473.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 575, 576, 580.

CHAPTER XX

I

NEW YEAR'S DAY in 1896 opened with an alarming ringing of Imperial telephone-bells. Two days before Dr. Jameson, Administrator of the British South Africa Company, of which Rhodes was managing director, had made a raid into the Transvaal in the hope that English Uitlanders would join him and force President Kruger to grant them the political rights which had been hitherto denied them. Chamberlain, as Colonial Minister, Rhodes as Prime Minister at the Cape and Sir Hercules Robinson as Governor of Cape Colony denied having had any fore-knowledge of the raid, and orders were sent to Jameson to retire. He refused to obey, the Uitlanders did not join him, and on January 1, 1896, he was defeated by Boer forces and surrendered.

The Queen's eyes were very troublesome and the telegrams which poured in must be read to her, but her only complaint was that they were not sent to her more expeditiously. She had seen one night in the evening paper a telegram about this crisis which did not reach her officially till next morning. That was very wrong, and Mr. Chamberlain must see to it : otherwise he was acting firmly and prudently.* But there was one telegram that had passed over the wires, not Governmental, which had to receive her very special attention. As soon as news of the failure

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 9, 10.

of the Jameson raid reached Berlin, the Kaiser summoned a Cabinet Council, and there was drafted and approved a telegram addressed to President Kruger and signed by him. It ran as follows : "I sincerely congratulate you that you and your people have succeeded, by your own energetic action and without appealing for help to friendly Powers, in restoring order against the armed bands that broke into your country as disturbers of the peace, and in safeguarding the independence of the country from attacks from without." *

This telegram, when published, produced in Germany an outburst of enthusiastic approval, and in England a storm of fury, which was heightened by the news that the Kaiser had ordered a body of Colonial troops to land at Delagoa Bay, and, marching through Portuguese territory to Pretoria, to offer their services to President Kruger. Had not the Portuguese Government refused to give them passage, war between England and Germany must have followed.† But there was still the Kaiser's telegram to be dealt with : considering that the writer was an Admiral in the British Navy and a Colonel in the British Army, it was, as the Prince of Wales wrote to his Mother "a most gratuitous act of unfriendliness." Besides what business had he to send a message to Kruger at all ? Never must he come to Cowes again !

Instead of a "strong note" being sent to the British Ambassador at Berlin from the Foreign Office, the Queen handled this outrageous telegram of the Kaiser's herself. She asked nobody's advice—why should she ?—for nobody knew as well as she how to deal with William, and she wrote as follows :

"My dear William,

"As your grandmother to whom you have always shewn so

* Text from the *Queen's Journal*.

† Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 723.

much affection and of whose example you have always spoken with such respect, I feel I cannot refrain from expressing my deep regret at the telegram you sent President Kruger. It is considered very unfriendly towards this country, which I feel sure it is not intended to be, and has, I grieve to say, made a very painful impression here. The action of Dr. Jameson was of course very wrong and totally unwarranted, but considering the very peculiar position in which the Transvaal stands towards Great Britain, I think it would have been far better to have said nothing. Our great wish has always been to keep on the best of terms with Germany, trying to act together but I fear your Agents in the Colonies do the very reverse, which deeply grieves me. Let me hope that you will try and check this. . .

"I hope you will take my remarks in good part as they are entirely dictated by my desire for your good.

"Victoria R. I."*

Now the Kaiser had already been in correspondence with the Tsar about the raid. He had told him that the Transvaal "had been attacked in a most foul way, as it seems not without England's knowledge," and that he would never allow the Transvaal to be trampled on. But his grandmother's letter completely deflated him, and he wrote back to say that he knew her Government had done all they could to stop the raid. The raiders therefore, he hurriedly continued, were rebels, and "rebels against the will of her Most Gracious Majesty the Queen were to me the most execrable beings in the world . . . and I thought it necessary to show that publicly." No gentleman, he affirmed, could see any hostile intent in this, and the gun-boat he had sent to Delagoa Bay was to check disorder. He appealed to Lord Salisbury to testify to all his friendly acts towards England. It was dreadful to think of Germany and England looking askance at each other. What would the Duke of Wellington and Blücher say?†

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 8, 9.

† Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 725, 726.

Nobody could tell about that, and the Queen sent this deplorable letter to Lord Salisbury who was named therein as a witness to poor William's passion for England. The last intercourse the Prime Minister had had with him was when, last year at Cowes, the Kaiser had been deliberately insolent. But that large-minded man bore him no ill-will. He suggested to the Queen that the Kaiser had sent that silly telegram to Kruger in a moment of excitement, and advised her "to accept his explanations without enquiring too narrowly into the truth of them." His idea seemed to be to frighten England into joining the Triple Alliance. . . Then the Queen wrote to the Prince of Wales, who was beside himself with fury at his frightful nephew, and had asked his mother to give him "a good snub." She enclosed her own letter to William and his answer to it, and told him that Princes and Sovereigns must never irritate each other by cutting remarks. "William's faults," she said, "come from impetuosity (as well as conceit) and calmness and firmness are the most powerful weapons in such cases." They were certainly powerful enough in this case, but then it was William's grandmother who wielded them ; and the Kaiser who a few days previously had proclaimed that he would not allow England to bully the Transvaal, and was busy putting on his shining armour took it all off again, and the excitement he had raised in Germany died down. No doubt the situation was being handled by Lord Salisbury and Mr. Chamberlain with calmness and firmness equal to the Queen's, but nobody except that superb matriarch could possibly have flattened William out with anything like her success.

Then there came a cruel stroke of fate on her private and most happy domestic life. Prince Henry of Battenberg was attacked by fever out in Ashanti. It did not at

first seem serious, but he was sent home and he died on the voyage.*

For some months, since the visit of Slatin Pasha to England in the last summer, Imperial concerns in Egypt and in especial the reconquest of the Sudan had been much under consideration, and lately King Leopold II of Belgium had been trying to interest Lord Salisbury in a most original programme of his own devising which bore on them. Omitting his scheme for the annexation of China and its incorporation in the Indian Empire, the main outline of his Egyptian policy was that England should procure for him from the Khedive a lease of such part of the Sudan as was in the hands of the Mahdists. The Mahdi's troops, the King said, were excellent material, and he would organize them into a Colonial army to be taken into British pay. England would then march them off to Armenia and stop the terrible Turkish massacres that horrified the Queen so much. Lord Salisbury listened to three of these secret conversations, and summed them up for the Queen in his very best style : "The idea of an English General at the head of an army of dervishes marching from Khartoum to Lake Van, in order to prevent Mohammedans from maltreating Christians, struck me as so quaint that I hastened to give the conversation another turn. . ."† The Queen thought that her poor cousin had taken leave of his senses, and after this refreshing interlude, the Prime Minister became serious again and got out his biggest maps.

There was an "idea," he perceived, at the bottom of the King's extravaganza. Apart from Lake Van he evidently wanted to secure some rights for himself on the upper Nile. What for ? Perhaps to sell to France, for France knew

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 20, 26.

† *Ibid.*, p. 25.

that England would not leave the Sudan in the hands of the dervishes for ever, and was herself planning to send out exploring parties across Africa from the West coast to the Upper Nile valley, with a view to acquiring trading or protectorate rights ; and if France once got a footing there, whether by an exploring party or, as Leopold hoped, by a purchase from him, there would certainly be trouble. That should be anticipated if possible, and this spring (1896) there occurred an admirable opportunity for England to take up again the work which had been tragically suspended at the fall of Khartoum in 1885. An Italian expeditionary force in Abyssinia had been defeated at Adowa, and its base at Kassala was threatened by a dervish army under the Khalifa, the spiritual successor of the Mahdi. An English expedition up the Nile into the northern Sudan would draw away the Khalifa's forces from Kassala, and, since Italy was Germany's ally, it would find favour at Berlin : possibly Count Hatzfeldt, German Ambassador in London, had himself suggested it to Lord Salisbury,* and the Italian Government naturally welcomed the project. Such an expedition furnished a really altruistic reason for taking the first step towards the reconquest of the Sudan, and the Queen and Lord Salisbury, both of whom knew to what this expedition to rescue the Italians paved the way, were miracles of discretion. He telegraphed to her out at Cimiez, where she was taking her spring holiday, that the safest way of relieving Kassala was to send this Egyptian expedition under the Sirdar, Sir Herbert Kitchener, up the Nile into the Sudanese province of Dongola, and she telegraphed her approval of thus helping "the poor Italians." † Not a word more.

Other people were not so discreet. The expedition was

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 709 note.

† Letters, III, iii, p. 33.

opposed in the House of Commons, and Mr. Morley moved a vote of censure on the Government for ordering it, but it was rejected by a large majority, and the expedition started from Cairo. What was more serious was the feeling against it in Russia and France, for Prince Lobanoff, a violent Anglophobe was now Foreign Minister to the Tsar, and France regarded any English movement in Egypt with the deepest suspicion. Once again the Queen matriarchally intervened and invited the Tsar and Tsarina with their baby daughter to spend a quiet domestic fortnight with her in September at Balmoral. Since it was his first visit to England after his accession it was only right that Lord Salisbury should come up and have a quiet talk with him. The Queen based great hopes on this prospective gathering, and she was happier about her eyes, for Professor Pagenstecher had told her they were healthy and that he could improve her sight ; and while the Tsar was here would come the day when she had reigned longer than any English Sovereign. To crown these auspicious events there came the news two days before the Tsar's arrival that Kitchener had taken Dongola, and that the dervishes were in full retreat. And possibly the sudden death of the Anglophobe Prince Lobanoff,* who would have been in attendance on the Tsar, added something to the promise of a fruitful and harmonious meeting.

The great family party assembled at the Castle of Albert's creation : four generations of the English House were gathered there, as had never before happened in all its history. Of the first generation was the Queen and her cousin the Duke of Cambridge, of the second the Prince of Wales and other sons and daughters-in-law, of the third the Duke of York and the Empress of all the Russias and other grandchildren, and of the fourth a very small boy, aged two, son of the Duke of York. The Queen found David the most

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 694.

attractive child. His nurse brought him in at the end of lunch, and he was impatient to make his great-grandmother get up. He tried to pull her out of her chair, saying "Get up, Gangan," and he appealed to the Indian servant who stood behind it crying, "Man, pull it," but "man," we must suppose, did not reckon such an act among his duties. The intimacy of the family atmosphere was all that it should be, with drives about the country-side, and planting of commemorative trees and a film of them all moving about on the terrace with the children at play, by that wonderful new cinematograph process, which, like all new appliances of science, gave the Queen a child-like delight—how wonderful, for instance, she had found it to listen to speeches at the Mayoral banquet at Liverpool on the telephone while she dined at home, or to speak to a phonograph cylinder, knowing that King Menelik would hear her gracious message in her own voice out in Abyssinia—but was Valhalla really exercising any spell upon the Tsar? Nicky was very amiable and well-disposed: he agreed that something must be done to stop these frightful Armenian massacres; he regretted William's unfriendliness to England; the Queen spoke of the great friendship between Russia and France, and he said it arose from a sense of their isolation in the face of the Triple Alliance; he assured her that Russia had no designs upon India, but he would say nothing about this English expedition, which everyone now knew was for the reconquest of the Sudan, nor about the English occupation of Egypt, and these were exactly the topics on which the Queen, in informal talks, particularly wanted to learn his attitude. Lord Salisbury who had a most pleasant interview with him was as dissatisfied as she. He understood the Tsar to say that he had no objection to England staying in Egypt permanently, but he suddenly broke off the subject as if he felt it would be imprudent to say more. All these inter-

-views were inconclusive ; his gentleness and amiability were like some slippery integument which prevented any coming to grips with what lay below, and to the Queen's practical mind and robust sincerity it was easier to tackle William than him. The Tsar and Tsarina were going on to pay a state visit to Paris : he did not seem to care for it much ; like Albert, he was much shocked at the irreligious spirit of France, and he meant to visit Notre Dame as soon as he got there, and give audience to the Archbishop. That was very right and laudable, but what the Queen wanted to know was whether his sentiment towards England was really friendly, and whether he was likely to be influenced by political conversations in Paris. She was uneasy about it, and, conscious that she had got nothing definite out of him, in spite of all these private talks after tea, wrote to him, almost as soon as he left, to say that she hoped he would firmly impress on the French his disapproval of all their unfriendliness towards England. But it was in vain that she waited for any assurance. He merely did not answer her letter, and neither she nor England, nor Lord Salisbury knew any more about his real sentiment towards England than if he had never been to Balmoral at all. A disappointment.*

THE Queen's Diamond Jubilee was approaching, for on June 20, 1897 she would complete the sixtieth year of her reign, and six months before that date the Kaiser was making enquiries about his coming and asking if he should bring some of his children with him, though it had been already settled (and he knew it) that no reigning monarchs at all were to be invited. The Prince of Wales had dreadful qualms that the Queen might allow him to come, for his mother had put in a word for him, and he wrote in

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 71-103.

great agitation to the Queen's Secretary, saying that he would try to boss everything and would make endless trouble, and she would certainly regret having asked him. But he was reassured: the Queen said she had not the slightest intention of allowing it; "it would never do for many reasons," among which no doubt a forcible one was that she did not wish her Jubilee to be as full of disagreeable family frictions as those frightful Cowes regattas had been. Besides, this celebration was to be entirely different in character from the Jubilee of 1887, when Kings of foreign lands came with their homage. It was to be a festival of Empire, a great gathering of representatives from the Colonies and Dominions, coming to pay their affectionate respects to their Queen and Mother.

It was "Mother" that she had become in popular sentiment, and even as the policeman outside Buckingham Palace, when asked by a bystander why the flag was flying, replied "Mother's come 'ome," so symbolically to the Empire that was just what she stood for. Ten years ago her Sovereignty and her womanhood had combined to render her to her English people a figure of high romance and sentiment, and now that conception of her, vastly intensified, had spread to the remotest ends of the world. Enormous as had been the expansion of the Empire, the prestige and the Motherhood of the little old lady in black had kept pace with it, and it was this that formed the theme of the coming celebrations.

The Queen was at Balmoral when her "poor old birthday" came round again in May 1897: seventy-eight was a good age, but she prayed for a few years more yet.* By now the programme for the Jubilee was settled: it had given a good deal of trouble, even though William would not be here to interfere. Her lameness prevented her from tak-

* Letters, III, iii, p. 165.

ing part in any sort of procession, and the main feature was to be a six mile drive through the streets of London with a pause at the West End of St. Paul's Cathedral, for a short service of a *Te Deum* and a few prayers. The suggestion had been put forward that the State landau in which she sat, drawn by the eight cream-coloured horses should proceed up an inclined plane into the Cathedral and stand below the Dome during the service, but on reflection this idea seemed undesirable and was abandoned.* The actual anniversary of Accession day occurred on a Sunday, so the celebration was fixed for the Tuesday following, and Sunday was a family gathering at Windsor. The Queen went to service in St. George's Chapel in the morning, and sat facing the altar with her children and grandchildren and once more she listened to Albert's *Te Deum* : at the end, as at Westminster Abbey ten years before, they all came up to her and she kissed them. Next day she went up to London, driving from Paddington to Buckingham Palace, noting with joy the beaming faces of the huge crowds and the arch with the motto "Our hearts thy Throne" and the incessant cheering. The Family was in full force and gave her their presents, and among her foreign guests was the Arch-duke Franz Ferdinand and the Prince of Naples and the Prince of Persia. There was a big dinner that night, and the front of her dress was of gold embroidery worked in India, and afterwards fifteen Colonial Premiers and their wives, and the special envoys from overseas, and the officers of the Indian troops who were to form her escort next day were all presented.

Then came the day itself. There was a slight disappointment in the morning, for she had much wanted to watch from the windows the whole of the colossal procession of troops that was to precede her, but the head of it had already

* Letters, III, iii, p. 105.

passed. Soon it was time for her to start ; the Princess of Wales and Princess Christian sat opposite her in the State landau, but the Empress Frederick could not be with her, for reasons of etiquette, since her rank prevented her from sitting with her back to the horses, and the Queen must be alone to greet her people with no one by her side. As she left the Palace she touched an electric button, and the message she had written was telegraphed to the remotest ends of her Empire : "From my heart I thank my beloved people. May God bless them . . ." * And Mother went for her long drive through the shouting streets.

II

DURING this year Kitchener in Egypt had been consolidating the province of Dongola, and preparing for the advance which should wipe out the disaster of 1885 and restore the Sudan to the Khedive. All was ready by the beginning of 1898 and in April the Khalifa's forces were heavily defeated on the river Atbara. Then while he was pushing on towards Khartoum came the death of the man whom the Queen still regarded as having been responsible for the loss of the province and the death of General Gordon, which to her was a blot on the nation's honour. Nothing could efface that conviction or the sense that he had been the enemy of the State, and out of all his sixty years of service she could find nothing for praise except his personal loyalty to her and his readiness to do anything for the Family. She wrote affectionately to Mrs. Gladstone about her loss, but her inflexible sincerity forbade her to give any further word of appreciation, for that would have been a recantation, and false at that. She did not like the Prince of Wales acting as Pall Bearer at the funeral, or his kissing Mrs. Glad-

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 170-174.

-stone's hand, which was the most perfect and apt of gestures. But the Queen's last word was "I never liked him, and I will say nothing about him." * *Sunt lacrimae rerum.*

On September 2 Kitchener engaged the dervish army of the Khalifa, consisting of about thirty-five thousand men, at Omdurman and practically annihilated it. The British and Egyptian flags were hoisted above Gordon's palace, and a memorial service was held on the spot where he was killed : at long last the Queen could write in her Journal "Surely he is avenged." Instantly the Kaiser expressed his gratification to the Queen, and announced the joyous tidings to troops drawn up by the Waterloo Column in Hanover "who gave three cheers for you and their brave British comrades." † There can be no doubt that he was most anxious to secure some solid understanding with England, for he regarded the *rapprochement* of France and Russia with great uneasiness, and the idea of an encircled Germany was an obsession to him. Next to cordial relations with England, what the Kaiser most desired was that England should be on bad terms with France, and this amiable aspiration was presently fulfilled.

Some six weeks before the recovery of Khartoum, Lord Cromer had attended a Cabinet meeting in London, and suggested that, after the British and Egyptian flags had been hoisted there, Kitchener, with gun-boats and a small force, should proceed at least six hundred miles further up the White Nile as far as a place called Fashoda and "that any other flag in that valley should be removed." ‡ Though he did not specify what sort of flag might be discovered there, it is clear that he at least suspected that some French expedition, of which several had been despatched eastwards

* Lord Esher, Journals, i, p. 217.

† Letters, III, iii, p. 274.

‡ *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 261.

from the West of Africa during the last three years, had reached the Southern Sudan.

The disclosure came in picturesque circumstances. Just before this further expedition started southwards from Omdurman, a dervish steamer appeared on the river from the Emir of the White Nile, who was unaware that Omdurman was in the hands of British and Egyptian troops, and thought that the Khalifa was still in possession. The message it bore was a request for reinforcements to drive the "Turk" out of Fashoda. As "Turk" was the Arab term for any foreigner, it was easy to guess that this Turk was of the French variety. So the English variety set off in five gun-boats, finished off the Emir and steamed on towards Fashoda. When close, Kitchener sent on a communication addressed to "The Chief of the European Expedition," to say that he was arriving next day.

Early that morning there came down the Nile a little rowing-boat flying a gigantic tricolour, and a black sergeant handed Kitchener a note saying that Captain Marchand, according to the orders of his Government, had made a treaty with the native chief, putting Fashoda and district under French protection, and that he would be happy to salute Kitchener in the name of France. The two met: Marchand's force consisted of eight Frenchmen and a hundred and twenty African soldiers, short of supplies and ammunition, but their commander refused to haul down his flag without orders from home. He realised, however, that Kitchener by his victory at Omdurman had rescued him from being annihilated by the dervishes. The English commander hoisted the Egyptian flag without interfering with the French flag, left a strong garrison and went down the river to report to Lord Cromer.*

For some six weeks there was an *impasse* out of which

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 285-287.

war seemed the only way. The French, already extremely jealous of the English hold on Egypt, made it a point of honour not to accept dictation and haul down their flag, while, on the other side, Lord Salisbury refused to enter into any discussion with the French Government till that symbolical act was accomplished. The Queen and the whole country were with him in that, but the idea of war over so small and remote an incident was nightmare to her. But imperial interests were involved and never did the idea of admitting that France had any right in the territory reclaimed for Egypt by Kitchener's expedition enter her head. France must yield, but she must not be humiliated : Lord Salisbury must find a way. Fortunately M. Delcassé had lately become Foreign Minister, whose main political aim was to bring about a better understanding between the countries, and between them they hit upon a workable formula. Fashoda was too remote to give France the outlet she needed on the Nile, and since it was thus of no use to her, Marchand could be told to haul down the French flag without humiliation. But there still remained in the general French consciousness a very bitter feeling against England. Though the Quai d'Orsay declared that Fashoda had been abandoned as being useless, the nation decided that the Government had yielded to England's dictation.

The Kaiser, in this autumn of 1898, had paid a visit to Sultan Abdul Hamid at Constantinople, and had made a tour in Palestine which the cartoonists of France regarded as deliberately Messianic. He had heard that Russia had advised the French evacuation of Fashoda, and so, with his invariable aim of disturbing Franco-Russian amity, told the Tsar that the East generally considered it "France's second Sedan." * He was still very anxious to be on good terms

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 713.

with England, and even Lord Salisbury, who so rightly looked upon his professions of goodwill with suspicion, suggested to the Queen that if he shewed any desire to visit England again—he had not been there since the Kruger telegram—it would be wise to invite him, for with France in this bitter mood it was “desirable that the world should believe in an understanding between Germany and England”: in other words “splendid isolation” had its drawbacks. The Queen evidently did not want to risk a direct invitation being declined (for who could tell what mood William might not be in at any moment?), and so after sounding him through the Empress Frederick, conveyed the invitation through her Ambassador at Berlin.* The Kaiser jumped at it, and wrote the most effusive letter of thanks for the flower-pot she had sent him at Christmas. What joy there must be in England over the great successes in Egypt! What merry faces and soldiers’ hearts beating higher! But France, he characteristically wrote, was in a terrible plight: the Dreyfus affair had disclosed abysses of corruption. Russia was no better: she was on the verge of financial collapse. She had been spending enormously on increasing her forces on the German frontier, there was famine in the country districts, and indeed it was no wonder that the Tsar had invited the Powers to hold a Peace Conference next year.† The purport of all this, happy England, corrupt France, bankrupt Russia, was clear enough: Germany was England’s friend.

But how right was the Queen never to trust him, though always anxious to be on good terms with him. In January 1899 came his fortieth birthday: she made a slightly austere note in her Journal: “I wish he were more prudent and less impulsive at such an age,” but sent him her invariable

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 312, 321.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 323–325.

greetings to which he replied with a torrent of sentimentality. He recalled how dear Grandpapa used to swing him "a tiny weeny brat" in a napkin. Trust in God, coupled with the knowledge that a very very kind Grandmother lovingly followed his career gave him strength to bear the burden of monarchy. He knew he was a queer and impetuous colleague, and though she might sometimes shake her head over his tricks, her good and genial heart would mitigate that by a genial smile, etc.*

Unluckily just now the good and genial Grandmother was not at all disposed to mitigate the shakings of her head by smiles, for William gave her several reasons for shaking it very severely and frowning instead. For while he was writing these optimistic sentiments, Sir Frank Lascelles, British Ambassador at Berlin, had to report the Kaiser's continuous attempts to make trouble between England and Russia by telling him lurid stories of Russia's secret intrigues against her : that was his way of shepherding England into the German fold. The Queen took this in hand herself : it was wiser to treat it as a family matter which she could deal with better than anybody. So without any smile she wrote privately to the Tsar :

"I feel I must write and tell you something which you *ought* to know, and perhaps do not. It is, I am sorry to say, that William takes every opportunity of impressing upon Sir F. Lascelles that Russia is doing all in her power to work against us ; that she offers alliances to other Powers and has made one with the Ameer of Afghanistan against us.

"I need not say that I do not believe a word of this, neither do Lord Salisbury nor Sir F. Lascelles.

"But I am afraid that William may go and tell things against us to you, just as he does about you to us. If so, pray tell me openly and confidentially. It is so important that we should

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 336, 337.

understand each other and that such mischievous and unstraight-forward proceedings should be put a stop to." *

But hardly had she put a spoke in that wheel when William began to spin another. The Duke of Coburg's (Prince Alfred) only son died in February 1899, and the question arose as to future succession. Next in primogeniture came the Duke of Connaught but the Kaiser, furious at not having been consulted, threatened that if his Uncle was made heir to the Duchy the Reichstag should veto the appointment.† The Queen therefore, unwilling to make trouble, settled on the young Duke of Albany, and the Kaiser looked about for another pretext for quarrelling with the country with which he truly wished to be friends. His feverish craving for the recognition of his own supreme importance seems the real reason of these outbursts, and he was also annoyed that the Queen would not let him come to England for her birthday, but had invited him for later in the year. A trumpety dispute about Samoa served him for his text, and on it he sent the Queen by way of a greeting on her eightieth birthday a portentous sermon. She did not like long sermons from anybody, and the delivery of this one was singularly displeasing. He recounted at length the unwearied acts of kindness and goodwill which he had showered on England, some of which, he said, had made his Anglophobe subjects very angry with him, and what was the result? Lord Salisbury in this Samoan dispute had treated Germany in the most contemptuous manner: he cared no more for her than for "Portugal, Chile or the Patagonians," and in consequence German feeling was most bitter. All his own labours were thrown away, and his heart bled. He had hoped to come to England for his grandmother's birthday, for Germany would have under-

* Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 741, 742 note.

† *Ibid.*, p. 741.

-stood that to be the private visit of a dutiful grandson, but she had forbidden that and in the present state of embittered feeling it was impossible to make a mere pleasure trip to Cowes. And all this unhappiness was caused by that sinister Lord Salisbury about Samoa : "a stupid island which is a hairpin to England compared to the thousands of square miles she is annexing right and left unopposed every year."

Perhaps there was a certain truth in that, for nobody could deny the expansion of the Empire ; but if the Kaiser hoped to "draw" his grandmother over that, he was sadly mistaken. It was enough that in this indictment against Lord Salisbury about Samoa he had made detailed and categorical accusations and so the Queen sent this letter to him, and Lord Salisbury disposed of every point of complaint with devastating finality, quoting chapter and verse : there was not an atom of truth in any of them. So once more, instead of making this a matter for the Foreign Office, the Queen gave the Kaiser plain and grandmotherly advice : "The tone," she said, "in which you write about Lord Salisbury, I can only attribute to a temporary irritation on your part, as I do not think you would otherwise have written in such a manner, and I doubt whether any Sovereign ever wrote in such terms to another Sovereign, and that Sovereign his own Grandmother, about their Prime Minister." As for her invitation to visit her this year, the actual date of her birthday was inconvenient, but, though he had said he could not possibly come, she would still be very happy to receive him if he did, at the end of July, but not for the Cowes Regatta. And she was his "very affectionate Grandmother V.R.I." . . .* Such letters always had a peculiarly eviscerating effect on William, and Lord Salisbury congratulated the Queen "on the most salutary effect" of this one. The

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 375-382.

Kaiser instantly accepted the renewed invitation, but his visit had to be postponed owing to an accident to his wife. Might he come later, in November? He might.

To set against the slight worry caused her by this volatile grandson was the pleasure of her eightieth birthday. She, who nearly forty years ago had thought of death as a release and a rejoining of all she loved, wanted more years yet to devote to the good of her country. Presents had poured in from the Family and from friends: Lord Rosebery, by a happy thought, had sent her a miniature of Prince Charles Edward, whom she would never allow to be called "the young Pretender," and there were bouquets innumerable, and over two thousand telegrams of congratulation. It was a busy day she spent at Windsor: had such a programme been submitted to her even by Lord Beaconsfield thirty years ago, she would have protested that she was being "teased and tormented." A choir from Eton and Windsor serenaded her at breakfast, she knighted the Mayor of Windsor, and watched the Eton volunteers. Her Scots Guards marched past, she planted a tree, she had a big Family lunch, and received the Warrant Holders of Windsor. She drove out through the thronged and decorated town to the Mausoleum where she laid one of her nosebags "at the foot of the dear tomb." She put on one of her Jubilee dresses for the Family dinner, and then they went to the Waterloo Chamber to see three acts of *Lohengrin*, with the De Reszke brothers and Nordica in the cast. Never yet had she heard a Wagner opera, and she was enchanted with it. The pathos and tenderness were almost religious in feeling, and it was a fine close to a memorable day.*

BUT the clouds were gathering up for that storm which darkened but never dismayed the close of her undaunted

* Letters, III, iii, p. 371-374.

pilgrimage. She had received, not long before her birthday, a huge petition from the British Uitlanders of the Transvaal. It stated that, in spite of the promise of President Kruger, none of their grievances had been redressed. They were still without the franchise, though on the Rand they enormously outnumbered the Boers, and, owing to the vast expansion of the gold-mining industry, contributed to the native Government the bulk of the taxes. Sir Alfred Milner, now High Commissioner at the Cape, compared them to the helots, the slave population of ancient Sparta. The phrase lent itself to irony, for those English gentlemen, chiefly Jews, who had made vast fortunes in gold and diamond mines and had built huge mansions in fashionable quarters in London could be aptly termed "the helots of Park Lane," but Sir Alfred's definition of the unfranchised British population in the Rand was justified. It was in vain that he tried to get from President Kruger a tolerable redress of their grievances. By June the growing tension in the Transvaal was occupying the attention of the Government to the exclusion of all else, and though Lord Salisbury and the Cabinet generally thought that the moment had not arrived for sending anything like an ultimatum to the President, or for despatching troops, they began sending out transports and munitions to the Cape.

By a curious irony the Peace Conference to which the Tsar had invited representatives from Powers great and small had just met at The Hague, where for the next two months they held inconclusive conversation. They passed a resolution that war was a barbarism in which no Christian people should take part, and that before it was resorted to belligerents must refer their case for arbitration to an international tribunal to be established at The Hague. But neither President Kruger nor Lord Salisbury notified that they had a case to present, and as the summer went on the

refusal of the President to take any real steps to rectify the position of the Uitlanders was assuming a very serious aspect, for England was certainly suffering a humiliation in the eyes of the world by his defiance. Mr. Chamberlain was of opinion that there was only one solution, and though willing to continue negotiations considered them a waste of time. The country was inclining the same way, and now was demonstrated the significance of the Festival of Empire celebrated at the Diamond Jubilee two years before, and offers of military aid came from Canada and Australia. But throughout July and August the Government persevered in the policy of patience, for war on the Transvaal would produce un conjecturable reactions on the Continent. France and Germany had both become Colonial Powers to a much greater extent than heretofore, and there was violent jealousy in both countries of the apparently illimitable expansions of England.

By September it was no longer possible to remain inactive. Boers were massing on the Natal frontier and it might be attacked at any moment. For purposes of defence six thousand troops were ordered to sail from India and four battalions from England, but Lord Salisbury still hoped to avoid a rupture. Yet the Uitlanders could not be abandoned without great injustice, and he thought there was a risk of losing the whole of South Africa. "It is impossible," he wrote to the Queen, "to avoid believing that the Boers really aim at setting up a South African Republic consisting of the Transvaal, the Orange Free State and your Majesty's Colony," and Lord Wolseley at the War Office sounded a very grave warning: "If war comes we shall be obliged to send the largest force that has ever left our shores to take part in it, and the distance being so great, it will be in all respects the most serious business we have ever had on hand." In spite of this neither Lord Wolseley nor Sir Red-

vers Buller, who was sent out in command, thought there would be much fighting.*

On October 9 the British Government were spared any further discussion about sending an ultimatum to President Kruger, because the President sent one to them. It demanded that :

(i) All points of difference between England and the Transvaal should be settled by arbitration.

(ii) English troops on the Transvaal-Natal frontier should be withdrawn.

(iii) All English troops which had arrived in South Africa since June 1 should be withdrawn.

(iv) No further troops, now on the high seas, should land at any South African port.

The Transvaal Government demanded a satisfactory reply to these demands by October 11, 5 P. M. Failure to receive it would be regarded as equivalent to a formal declaration of war.

The Queen was at Balmoral when silence proclaimed war, and her first reactions were practical and characteristic. As Queen she drove to the barracks at Ballater to say good-bye to her guard of Gordon Highlanders who were leaving for South Africa ; as Mother to her people she told Lord Salisbury that she hoped the increased taxation for the expenses of the war would not fall on the working-classes, sixpence on beer would be a horrid burden ; as an old lady who habitually spent a few spring weeks in the South of France, she determined to go to Italy. For France, as had been fully expected, for once in accord with Germany, had broken out into an orgy of vituperation against England. She had not forgotten Fashoda, and though her Government behaved with strict neutrality, her graphic press, rightly identifying the Queen with her people, gave her Britannia's hel-

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 398-404.

-met, and poured on her such sheets of abusive captions and indecent caricatures as have never yet descended on the head of a woman. Back she went to Windsor, travelling through the night, and arriving there at nine in the morning, and before lunch she drove down to the Cavalry Barracks to inspect the composite regiment of Household troops that were going to the Cape, and spoke to the men and wished them Godspeed, and they cheered her and cheered her and would not stop cheering her, for they like France, identified her with her people. There were countless telegrams from the Cape about the arrival of troops, and daily she interviewed her Ministers and there was never a hint of fatigue.

England had already been at war for more than a month when the Kaiser paid his postponed visit to England in November. He was accompanied by his wife and two sons, and brought with him Count von Bülow. There had already been a slight scrap between the Prince of Wales and his nephew over the imperial staff, for the Kaiser intended to bring his naval A. D. C. Admiral Senden von Bibran, with whom the Prince had quarrelled two years before. The Prince now protested against the Admiral coming, and the Kaiser said that he should bring whom he pleased, and that if the Prince did not like it, he would not come at all.* It was ludicrous that two grown up men should behave like that, and obviously stern efforts at self-control would be necessary if the visit was to be a success, for there were so many topics, yachting and Kruger, and Navies and Colonies which it was wiser to avoid. But all went off better than might have been expected. Lord Salisbury owing to the death of his wife could not come to Windsor, but the Kaiser had a very amicable interview with Mr. Balfour instead, and he and Bülow had long and harmonious talks with the Queen, deploring the ill-feeling in Germany towards

* Lee, Edward VII, i, p. 747.

England, and, evidently by preconcerted arrangement, attributing it to the evil influence of Bismarck, the point being that the Queen should be convinced that it was none of William's doing. Then, after Windsor, the party stayed at Sandringham, and those, too, must have been careful days, for the Kaiserin disapproved of her uncle-in-law as an immoral flâneur, and there was no wrench at parting. Lord Salisbury gave the cautious opinion that the visit might be "useful," and though Mr. Chamberlain made a most enthusiastic speech at Leicester on the value of the political conversations that had been held, he did not know as well as the Queen and Lord Salisbury what the Kaiser's protestations were worth. An Emperor, particularly this sort of Emperor, who could strike an attitude in front of the Round Tower at Windsor, and exclaim to his staff "From this Tower the world is ruled!" was a man who had to be watched.

Then for England came perilous days. On December 10, General Gatacre was defeated at Stormberg, and Lord Methuen at Magersfontein, and before the week was out Sir Redvers Buller, in an attempt to relieve Ladysmith was defeated at Colenso with the loss of ten guns. He telegraphed to the War Office the same night in the most disheartened terms, advising the abandonment of Ladysmith and of the offensive, and the taking up of a defensive position in South Natal. This telegram was sent to the Queen early next morning, and she immediately replied to Lord Lansdowne that it was quite impossible to let Ladysmith go; another attempt to relieve it must be made. The Cabinet had come to the same conclusion and had also decided to send out Lord Roberts to take over the command, with Lord Kitchener as Chief of his Staff. They had not yet told Lord Wolseley which was "very extraordinary," but that they had not told her was worse: that was "very

wrong." She let Lord Lansdowne know that, but approved.*

It was a disastrous week, and she was old and very blind and very lame, but where was the good of being Queen and Mother of her immense Empire, unless she behaved as such ? She proceeded to do so.

These set-backs must be retrieved : nothing else mattered, and when Mr. Balfour came down to Windsor, and made some melancholy reflection, she pulled him up with the firmest of hands. "Please understand," she said, "that there is no one depressed in my house : we are not interested in the possibilities of defeat : they do not exist." She had no thought of going to Osborne for Christmas as she had done every year since Albert and she had made it their country home, and she remained at Windsor, in order to be more accessible to her Ministers. She crocheted shawls for her soldiers, she sent out a box of chocolate to every man at the front with a coloured print of herself on it, and on Boxing Day she gave a tea and an immense Christmas Tree in St. George's Hall to the wives and children of Windsor troops. The Family gathered in force, and served them, and she was wheeled up and down in her chair and gave her guests their presents. Certainly it had been a sad year, her troops had suffered and she had lost many friends, and she was very anxious about the health of her eldest daughter. But there must be no despondency, and she wrote in her Journal as the final entry for the year :

"In the midst of it all I have, however, to thank God for many mercies and for the splendid unity and loyalty of my Empire. I pray God to bless and preserve all my children, grandchildren, and kind relations and friends, and may there be brighter days in store for us." †

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 735, 736.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 448-451.

CHAPTER XXI

I

THERE had been some significant correspondence going on between Royal relations. Just after the Colenso disaster the Tsar wrote to the Queen, and though his letter is apparently not extant its tone may be conjectured by an audience he gave at the same time to Sir Charles Scott, British Ambassador at St. Petersburg. He wished that the Queen should be assured of his most friendly feelings, and "begged her Majesty's Government to discredit entirely any reports of Russian projects likely in any way to conflict with our (English) interests." That assurance seems to answer with very astonishing fitness a letter that the Queen wrote him in the spring of 1899 telling him that the Kaiser constantly impressed on the British Ambassador at Berlin "that Russia is doing all in her power to work against us."

A few days later the Queen received an effusive letter from the Kaiser whose heart was still full of gratitude for the lovely days at Windsor. As it was Christmas and her country was at war, he appropriately continued: "Peace and goodwill sang the Angels once, and it seems sometimes difficult for the latter (angels?) to live up to these grand and simple words." He wrote on the same day to his Uncle reminding him of the Angels' song, but fearing that the new century would be "greeted by shrieks of dying men, killed

and maimed by lyddite shells and balls from Quickfirsers." Then, as was proper for the Colonel of the Royal Dragoons who took so keen an interest in the British Army, he appended a memorandum on the war, founded on the views of his military advisers. He pointed out that the campaign had hitherto been a failure, and that though the British losses could be replaced, far more troops, some 60,000, would be required. Also, there would probably be a rebellion in Cape Colony. Simultaneously the German Government sent a friendly message to Lord Salisbury.* This all seemed very sympathetic. But a slightly suspicious circumstance was that Dr. Leyds, Secretary of State in the Transvaal, was staying at Berlin, and having interviews with the Kaiser and his Chancellor.

On New Year's Day, 1900, the Kaiser gave audience to Count Osten-Sacken, Russian Ambassador in Berlin. He told him that "Russia alone could paralyse the power of England and deal it if need be a mortal blow," and that if the Tsar would advance towards India, he guaranteed that none should stir in Europe. Count Osten-Sacken asked if he should tell the Tsar that, and the Kaiser approved but said that he had assured the Tsar of it before. That was quite true: he had, and in consequence the Tsar had assured the British Government a couple of weeks before that "they might discredit entirely any reports of Russian projects likely in any way to conflict with our (English) interests." Osten-Sacken reported this New Year conversation with the Kaiser to the Russian Foreign Minister, Count Muravieff who duly laid it before the Tsar. The Tsar again quietly assured the British Ambassador that he would not permit any move that could embarrass England. Twice therefore had the Kaiser, with sweet memories of Windsor in his mind, urged Russia to take some hostile action which Eng-

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 444, 445. Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 805, 806.

-land would be unable to counter, for all available troops, now amounting to 70,000, were engaged in South Africa or on their way there.

The evidence that he was doing his treacherous best to break up the British Empire would, on these facts, have seemed conclusive to any impartial jury. But an impartial jury would have been wrong, as the sequel showed. Count Muravieff conveyed the substance of the Kaiser's interview with Osten-Sacken to the Russian Ambassadors in foreign countries, and the Ambassador in Paris communicated it to M. Delcassé. He instantly put his finger on the Kaiser's motive. A plot to combine Russia, Germany and France against England? Nothing of the sort. A mere trap, said M. Delcassé, to induce Russia and France to threaten some unfriendly act against England, and thus at long last, to realize the Kaiser's dream of driving her to join the Triple Alliance. The trap, to his very astute mind, was badly baited, and M. Delcassé who was as keen as the Prince of Wales himself for an Anglo-French Entente was not proposing to walk into it and wreck all that he stood for. Bitter as was the popular feeling in France, the Government stuck steadfastly to their policy of neutrality.*

So that method of drawing Germany and England together was no use, and the unwearied War Lord tried another. He wrote a fresh batch of "Notes on the Transvaal War," and sent them to his Uncle. It comprised twenty-two headings, and the gist of it was that England would require a long "respite," before she could hope to have sufficient forces in the field to bring the war to a successful conclusion, and that during that "respite" some guarantee was essential that Foreign Powers should not threaten her security. If that could not be obtained, it was far wiser for her to make some sort of settlement with the Boers at once.

* *Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 761-766.*

The nature of that settlement was sufficiently indicated by the concluding paragraph: "Even the best football club if it is beaten notwithstanding the most gallant defence accepts finally its defeat with equanimity. Last year in the great cricket match of England *v.* Australia the former took the victory of the latter quietly with chivalrous acknowledgment of her opponent." *

This remarkable document completely confirms M. Delcassé's interpretation of the Osten-Sacken interview. The Kaiser knew perfectly well that England would not make a settlement with the Boers, which, after the defeats in December could only be a surrender of all she was fighting for, and the guarantee against the attacks of other Powers which was necessary for her was ready waiting if she would join the Triple Alliance, which all along he had been so anxious to secure. His attempt to induce Russia and France to take hostile action against England had failed, and now, with precisely the same object, he warned her of what other Powers might be up to. The only safe alternative to a surrender to the Boers was to embrace William. If she refused, she must look out for trouble.

The Prince of Wales sent a translation of this memorandum to his mother, calling attention to the threat it contained, and in his answer to it alluded to the presence of Dr. Leyds at Berlin, and pointed out that a cricket match against Australia was not the same thing as fighting for the integrity of the British Empire. Just then the tide of war turned, and, during February 1900, Kimberley was relieved, General Cronje was heavily defeated by Lord Roberts at Paardeberg, and, at the end of the month, Ladysmith after a siege of four months was relieved also. The Kaiser, of course, sent warm congratulations, and tried a third route to his desired goal by warning his Uncle that Russia and

* Lee, Edward VII, i, pp. 807, 810.

France were now conspiring to force England to make terms with the Boers, and that he had been asked to join this conspiracy and had refused. He had told Russia that the Tsar, the Organizer of the Peace Conference, had better ascertain first whether England would be disposed to accept such intervention. He followed this up more officially by a telegram to the Queen stating that the Transvaal Government had asked for his intervention also, and that he had declined to give it unless they first made the same enquiries as he had recommended to the Tsar. The Queen took no time at all to consider what answer to give to that, and without consulting her Prime Minister or anybody else, instructed her Ambassador at Berlin to inform the Kaiser that "my whole nation is with me in a fixed determination to see this war through without intervention. The time for and the terms of peace must be left to our decision, and my country which is suffering from so heavy a sacrifice of precious lives will resist all interference." That was her first and last word on the subject, and having despatched her ultimatum she sent a copy of it to Lord Salisbury. He was delighted that she had taken it upon herself to announce the nation's sentiments, for he could not, if she had referred the matter to him, have used such strong language and he thought the effect would be admirable.*

The effect was admirable. The amazing man, oblivious of having tried to stir up Russia and France against England, of having counselled surrender to the Boers for fear that while England was occupied in South Africa sinister Foreign Powers might threaten her security at home, found that Lord Roberts's plan of campaign had led to the result he had predicted, and thanked God that he had been the means of averting interference! Under the British flag peace and prosperity would return to South Africa, and the

* Letters, III, iii, p. 509.

Angels' message of "Goodwill towards all men" which at Christmas had been overscored with the shriek of lyddite shells and dying men, would be realized.*

What was to be done with such a grandson? Lord Salisbury was clear about it. He had his doubts whether France and Russia had ever actually asked the Kaiser to intervene with them over the eventual settlement, but before now he had intimated to the Queen that it was best not to examine too closely into the truth of the Kaiser's statements, but to accept with warm welcome the expressions of his good-will. So the most cordial sentiments were interchanged: the Prince of Wales asked the Kaiser to Cowes, and the Kaiser asked his uncle to German manoeuvres in the autumn, and perhaps it was a good thing that neither of them was able to accept these invitations, for their hearts grew, if not fonder, less exasperated in absence. Devious as the paths in a maze, which often seem to be leading away from rather than towards the goal, had been the Kaiser's manoeuvrings, but throughout, in spite of his threats, his misrepresentations, his abortive conspiracies, he seems to have been pursuing the path which he hoped would draw England into the Triple Alliance. His refusal at the close of this year to see Kruger when he came to Berlin bears this out, and for the rest of the Queen's life he ceased to be a disturbing factor in political or family relations.†

II

IRISH troops had done very gallantly in South Africa, and the Queen was thinking of creating a regiment of Irish Guards, when, by an odd coincidence, the proposal was made to her by Lord Lansdowne, and she sanctioned it at

* Letters, III, iii, p. 519.

† *Ibid.*, pp. 508-519, 527. Lee, Edward VII, pp. 770, 775.

once. As a further recognition all ranks in any Irish regiment were given the distinction of wearing a sprig of shamrock in their head-dress on St. Patrick's Day.* It was March now, and the time for her spring holiday was near. Months before, at the very beginning of the war, she had made up her mind, owing to the indecent virulence of the French press to her personally, not to spend it as usual on the French Riviera, and since the English victories in February the attacks were multiplied. Originally she had thought of going to Bordighera, on the Italian Riviera instead, but that would entail travelling through France, and she gave up the idea of going abroad at all. But she wanted change, and, with thoughts of her gallant Irish troops in her mind, she settled to go to Ireland to get it. She had not been there since the Prince Consort's death, and she had never thought to set foot there again, but all the trouble over Home Rule and those Fenian outrages seemed far away, and the Irish, it was said, were very warm-hearted folk, though they had given her a great deal of trouble before now. Her subjects in the remotest of her Colonies had been "so kind to her," and they looked on her with personal love and affection, so perhaps if she went to see her Irish folk they might be kind to her too. But first she must spend a couple of days in London, and she took two long drives through the streets to let her people see that she shared their joys just as she had shared their anxieties. There was no pageant, neither police nor soldiers lined the route; and on one day she drove into the City, and another through streets of the West End, and the enthusiasm, she thought, was greater than at either of her Jubilees. Yet once more she came up from Windsor, and visited the Woolwich Arsenal where 20,000 men worked night and day making munitions, and from there, passing

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 498-501.

the house where General Gordon had been born, she drove to the Herbert Hospital to see the wounded from South Africa. There were many Irish soldiers among them, and she spoke to them all as she was wheeled through the wards, and everywhere in the streets Mother got the same tumultuous welcome : you could not hear what anyone said for the cheering, and so back to Windsor a little tired.*

Early in April she set off for Ireland with her two daughters, Princess Christian and Princess Henry of Battenberg : they all wore bunches of shamrock, and the Queen's bonnet and parasol were embroidered with the same in silver. The long route from Kingstown to Dublin was lined with cheering crowds, and for miles, as in London lately, there was scarcely a soldier or a policeman to guard it, and loyal inscriptions of the friendliest doggerel spanned the road : she could read of herself that :

"In her a thousand virtues closed
As Mother Wife and Queen."

In Dublin itself there were Nationalists on the Town Council, and that very morning, there had been some doubt whether the Lord Mayor and the Corporation would give her civic welcome : let an old lady from England drive into Dublin by all means, but why make a pomp to receive her ? † But they thought better of it, and the Lord Mayor was at the closed gates, and with all ceremony he commanded them to be thrown open for the entrance of Her Most Gracious Majesty. Thereafter there was no more tepidity, for who could resist her ? She was eighty years old and had come all the way from Windsor, travelling through the night, and had pinned a bunch of shamrock to her jacket and had it embroidered on her bonnet and parasol for

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 503-516.

† Private information.

all to see, and she was so little, and looked so lonely sitting all by herself on the back seat of her carriage, driving for two hours and a half through the slums of the City and she was so dearly gratified to find that her Irish subjects, as she had hoped, were kind to her, that Nationalists forgot their politics and cheered her from the steps of the City Hall, and Ireland was hers.

It was not much of a holiday. Every morning despatch-boxes and telegrams came in, and sometimes there was bad news from South Africa. General Gatacre had suffered a reverse, and the Cabinet, without mentioning names, urged Lord Roberts to supersede those who were responsible for it. That would never do ; once before she had complained that men, knowing nothing about Egypt and sitting in a room in London, wanted to direct military affairs, and she telegraphed to say that Lord Roberts must not be hampered by civilians at home. Sometimes there was a letter of no moment at all, but how right her Secretary was to show it her. For Private James Humphrey of the Royal Lancaster Regiment had been hit by a Boer bullet, but it had struck the box of the Queen's chocolate which he had on him, and that had saved his life, and Private Humphrey had sent the bullet and the chocolate box to Her Majesty.*

The morning's business got done, and she went for a turn in her pony-chair in the grounds of the Viceregal Lodge. The steed was really a white donkey, which Lord Kitchener had sent her from Egypt. There was always a crowd looking through the railings, and whenever they caught sight of the white donkey with her sitting in the chair, they began singing "God save the Queen." In the afternoon she was more public, and went long drives in her four-horsed landau : she went to see the Meath Hospital and the Convent of Loretto : she went to the Review

* Letters, III, iii, p. 530.

Ground, and there was a march past of Naval Brigade Field Batteries and Bluejackets and Marines and after them came small boys from the Hibernian School. She drove to Phoenix Park of sinister memory, but to-day there were 52,000 school-children from all parts of Ireland drawn up in line to welcome her. Once more she drove to Hospitals in the poorest parts of the town, and she saw her Jubilee Nurses at the Viceregal Lodge, and she purchased Irish lace and embroideries. There were dinner parties in the evening and music afterwards and evening parties, and wherever she went there was this "wild enthusiasm and affectionate loyalty." Lord Beaconsfield had once told her that during the last two centuries the Sovereign had only spent twenty-one days in Ireland, but when she embarked again on the *Victoria and Albert* she had just doubled that exiguous tale. She slept during most of the crossing, and that was not quite usual, for it was seldom that she slept during the day, and then in her Journal she summed up these busy weeks, peering into the future perhaps as much as recalling the past: "I felt quite sorry that all was over, and that this eventful visit, which caused so much interest and excitement, had, like everything else in this world, come to an end, though I am very tired and long for rest and quiet." *

But rest would come soon, and in the interval there was much to do. She went back to Windsor and inspected the officers and men of the *Powerful* and spoke to them, and went in to see them at their dinner. The King and Queen of Sweden and a Prince of Japan came to see her, and Professor Pagenstecher gave her good news about her eyes: there had been no change for the worse in the last three years. She held a Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace, and the crowds that welcomed her were as enthusiastic as ever, but it was sad on her return to Windsor to find her

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 521-544.

piping bull-finch dead in its cage. There came the best of news from South Africa, for Mafeking was relieved after a siege of seven months, and she drove over to Wellington College, where a grandson was at school, and the boys had put up an arch welcoming "The Queen of Mafeking." Then she went to Balmoral, and the "old birthday" returned, her eighty-first, and she was very conscious of the fatigue which age and anxieties had brought her. The old custom dating from the earliest years of her girlhood still persisted, and her "present-table" was laid out for her and loaded with the sort of memorial gifts she loved : the Prince and Princess of Wales had given her a model in bronze of the Duke of Wellington's hands, and William had sent a clock with a girdle of photographs of himself and his wife and his children. Thousands of telegrams poured in ; six extra hands had to help the two permanent telegraph clerks, and, as an Imperial present, the old Orange Free State was proclaimed as Her Majesty's Orange River Colony.

But she was not well, and the war was dragging on disappointingly : she had hoped that after those victories in the spring the end would have been in sight by now. But they must be thorough, and she sent a strong telegram to Lord Salisbury that Lord Roberts should remain out in South Africa as long as fighting continued, and that troops should not be recalled till all danger of fresh risings were over. "Do not disregard my earnest warning or even protest," * she wrote. Then good news and bad came together. Pretoria was occupied, but on the same day a battalion of her Irish yeomanry surrendered to the Boers. Lord Kitchener wrote to her of the difficulties of this guerilla warfare, and from China came bad news ; there had been a Boxer rising, and troops must be sent. That grew to nightmare, for there came a report that the British Legation had

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 556, 557.

been stormed and all the defenders murdered, and the thought of the butchered women and children haunted her. There seemed trouble everywhere.

Happily this tragic news proved untrue, and now back at Windsor once more she went up to London and gave a garden-party at Buckingham Palace, but the heat was terrific and it tired her. She was sleeping badly and had a good deal of pain, and there was grave domestic anxiety, which for some while her family had kept from her, but now she had to be told. Her son Alfred, Duke of Coburg, had been stricken with an incurable malady, and perhaps the news of his death a week afterwards was a relief, for he died without having to endure the months of suffering that the Emperor Frederick was going through. She had lost three children now, and she wrote, "It is hard at eighty-one . . . I pray God to help me to be patient and trust in Him, who has never failed me." *

It was in that spirit of child-like simplicity, which had characterized her religious outlook all her life, and of indomitable courage that she faced whatever the future held. Her own ill-health, her age, her private griefs, the trials of this "horrible year" must not cause her to spare herself or relax her service in the interests of her people. The first Session of the Parliament of the Australian Commonwealth would be opened in the spring, and her Government wanted the Duke of York to perform the ceremony. It would be a long parting from him and his wife, but all the Family had to serve the calls of the Empire, and another grandson Prince Christian Victor was with her troops in South Africa. And would she inspect and present colours to Colonial Forces when representatives of them came to England at the end of the war? Certainly if — if she was able to. All the business of State occupied her as before : arms and ammuni-

* Letters, III, iii, pp. 579-580.

ion were being landed at Lorenzo Marques, and brought through Portuguese territory to supply the Boers, and her Government must carry out Lord Roberts's recommendations and have that stopped, for the Transvaal was now British territory, and a friendly Power was therefore aiding rebels. Then Lord Salisbury wanted to appoint Lord Roberts as Commander-in-Chief in succession to Lord Wolseley : she did not like that, for she had hoped that the Duke of Connaught would take the office, and she went into the matter with all her old zest, but her Ministers thought otherwise and she supposed she must yield. In October there was a General Election ; the Conservatives were returned by a large majority, and the fresh distribution of Cabinet posts concerned her just as much as ever. And the sanitary condition of the poorer parts of Windsor was disgraceful : she read the report with horror, and her name must be used to remedy this dreadful state of affairs. They were all her people. . .

She had gone up to Balmoral once more for two months of this sad and anxious autumn, with the war still dragging on, and she attended to all these businesses and had a sharp word for Lord Lansdowne when, without consulting her, he proposed that a mixed force of about a thousand men should accompany the Duke of York to Australia, and that it should include a few men of the Household Cavalry and the Foot Guards : really this sort of thing must not happen again, she must be informed beforehand of any such disposal of her troops. Then came another affliction. Her grandson Prince Christian Victor out in South Africa was stricken with typhoid and died after a very short illness. She felt wretchedly unwell herself, without appetite and hardly able to eat, losing flesh rapidly and always tired, and would the war never come to an end ?

She was back at Windsor again in November, still stick-

ing to her work. She held a Council, she inspected Colonial troops who had been invalided home, and thanked them for their loyal service, she saw nurses who had looked after the sick in Mafeking. A contingent of her 1st Life Guards arrived from South Africa and they drew up close to her carriage and she said a few words to them ; next day she inspected Canadian troops, and their officers dined with her. Lord Roberts was coming back, and perhaps that was a good thing, for he was old too, and Lord Kitchener might prosecute the war with greater vigour if his hand was free. Lord Ampthill was going out to India as Governor of Madras, and she knighted him, and she went to the Town Hall at Windsor where there was a sale of Irish industries. . . Ireland, how that visit had tired her ! She knew now that her eldest daughter, the Empress Frederick, was fatally and incurably ill : the only thing to pray for was that she might not longer suffer the torments she had been through. For herself this dreadful sleeplessness continued, and this repulsion for food, but in all things, great and small, she carried out her share of the business of State, acute and discerning and determined, and with that amazing interest in detail that never waned.

The anniversary of December 14 came round and she went to the Mausoleum for the memorial service. Last year she had stayed at Windsor for Christmas, for she must show her people that the Black Week had left her undaunted, but now there was no call on her to do that, and perhaps Osborne would recuperate her. She wrote in her Journal still — there was the record of nearly seventy years in its pages now — and how kind her household were to her, and how anxious to do all they could ! Often she lay awake till it was nearly dawn on those long winter nights, and then, when she wanted to get up, and attend to the despatch-boxes her Ministers had sent her, she fell asleep again — most

provoking — and could not get to her work till the morning was nearly over. There was one more bereavement still ; Lady Churchill, who had been with her for fifty years, and who had taken part in those wonderful incognito expeditions with Albert in the Highlands, had a heart-attack and died on Christmas Day. The Queen wondered whether she ought to have allowed her to come to Osborne at all, for she was very frail, and was it her fault for having permitted it ?

Tempestuous weather : and during a sleepless night she followed the passage of the ship that carried the body of her beloved friend to the mainland. She could scarcely see now to sign papers, for her eyes had got much worse and she had to dictate a letter to Vicky, and since coming to Osborne a grand-daughter had been writing her Journal for her. She was afraid she overworked her family with all the things they must do for her.

The New Year of 1901 dawned, and in the afternoon she drove down to the Soldiers' Home where there were convalescents from South Africa, and she thanked them for all they had done, and hoped their New Year would be happy. She saw Lord Roberts who was home from South Africa and invested him with the Garter, and another day she saw her Colonial Secretary, Mr. Chamberlain, and her young grandson, Leopold, now Duke of Saxe-Coburg, about to go out to Germany to finish his education, and he played to her on the violin. She had planned a visit to the south in the spring, and hoped that would set her up again. Till January 13 she continued to dictate her Journal, and next day Lord Roberts came down to Osborne once more.

It was not known except to those who were in close touch that she was ill, but on January 19 there was published a notice in the Court Circular that she was not in her usual health, and unable to take her daily drives or to attend to

State business. The Duke of Connaught was in Berlin staying with the Kaiser for some monarchical celebrations, and he was telegraphed for. The Kaiser insisted on accompanying him, and they came to England together and went down to Osborne. For three days more she lingered, faintly conscious at intervals, but now her long day's work was done, and without a sigh she slipped from her the splendid burden of Empire which she had borne so long, and the wearisome shackles of mortality.

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